



READER

**MAYORAL SPOTLIGHT
ON LORI LIGHTFOOT**

Ben Joravsky | Curtis Black **8**

FILM REVIEWS

Ben Sachs | Andrea Gronvall |
Anne Elizabeth Moore **22**

**MUKQS + SHARKULA:
TOGETHER AT LAST**

Leor Galil **27**

A life told in images

Gonzalo Guzman's portraits and text,
paired with archival photographs, evoke
his grandfather's long journey. **15**

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

THE SNOW FINALLY STARTED—late, OK, but I'd been feeling anxious without it—and it finally feels like winter. We should slow down, right? Cuddle up with a warm mug of something and eight million books and forty million cats and refuse to take out the garbage? Not at the *Reader*. We're just getting going.

City Life, the friendly section that directly follows the Table of Contents, has several new features, including local permaculturist, teacher, and ecological systems designer Nance Klehm's new monthly column, Feral Citizen. We've also got Sightseeing, a new

history-focused short essay that will highlight little-known tidbits from our weird city's past. Man about town and history buff Joe Mason will be a frequent contributor, so it's sure to be a blast.

Of course we're also digging in deep, election-wise, with a focus this issue on Lori Lightfoot's mayoral campaign, as well as Maya Dukmasova's report from the 49th Ward, long held by Joe Moore. Can his challengers unseat the vulnerable candidate? After all the political strife, you'll surely want a break, so Mike Sula brings us along to a Malaysian cafe that

serves a delicious, uh, cheese tea. (Actually it sounds amazing.)

There's more, but I can't tell you about it yet. Have you learned to trust me when I tell you it will be great? It will, I promise.

Last week we erred in stating that Ahmedabad is the capital of the Indian state Gujarat. In fact it's the former capital. Sorry, Gandhinagarians!

And remember, we're taking your mail for a special one-time-only return of the letters section at letters@chicagoreader.com. We can't wait to hear from you. —ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

FEATURES



MAYORAL SPOTLIGHT

Meet Lori Lightfoot

Does the reform candidate stand a chance in post-Rahm Chicago?

**Q&A BY BEN JORAVSKY |
PROFILE BY CURTIS BLACK 8**

PHOTO ESSAY

A grandfather's life in images

Portraits and archival photographs evoke a long journey.

BY GONZALO GUZMAN 15

MUSIC FEATURE

When Mukqs met Sharkula

The oddball electronic artist and outsider rapper make weird sounds that go down easy together.

BY LEOR GALIL 27

IN THIS ISSUE

CITY LIFE

04 Public Service Announcement

Survivors find support at Mujeres Latinas en Acción.

04 Sightseeing Joe Mason tells the story of Streeterville's criminal namesake.

05 Feral Citizen Nance Klehm's new column invites us to look at the urban ecosystem.



NEWS & POLITICS

06 Joravsky | Politics Rahm's big TIF bamboozle and the illusion of oversight.

10 Dukmasova | Politics No more Joe Moore? The 49th Ward contends with the progressive who may not live up to his reputation.



FOOD & DRINK

13 Restaurant Review Resistance to Taiwanese cheese tea and Malaysian noodles is futile.

ARTS & CULTURE

18 Theater I Know My Own Heart looks back on the life of diarist, mountaineer, and queer icon Anne Lister; St. Nicholas presents a self-loathing white man in search of meaning; and I Call My Brothers is a portrait of the anxiety of being "other."

20 Lit It's a horse! It's a tank! It's Battlepug!

21 Comedy In It's a Guy Thing, three women explain everything you need to know about dudes.



FILM

22 Reviews *Lars von Trier has a really funny way of showing he loves women in The House That Jack Built, Pawel Pawlikowski chronicles a love affair that blazes across the Iron Curtain, and Life & Nothing More takes a hard look at a working-class woman and her son.*

25 Movies of Note *Of Fathers and Sons; Owned, A Tale of Two Americas; Paternal Rights; and more films to check out*



MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

30 Shows of note *Victor!, Grails, Ayanna Woods, and other excellent shows this week.*

36 Early Warnings *Ex Hex, Van Hunt, Mdou Moctar, Jawbox, and many more just-announced concerts.*

36 Gossip Wolf *Drone-song duo Mending near the halfway point of a 40-song narrative cycle, top-notch Chicago rapper Tree decisively ends his release drought, and Whitney trumpeter Will Miller drops the debut by his psychedelic soul-jazz band.*

CLASSIFIEDS

37 Jobs

37 Apartments & Spaces

37 Marketplace

37 Savage Love *Fact-checking dick size and navigating humiliation and commitment. Dan Savage offers advice for every situation.*

39 Comics *All-new weekly serial strips from Mike Centeno, Melissa Mendes, and John Porcellino*

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Where Latina voices are heard

Survivors find support at Mujeres Latinas en Acción.

FOR MUJERES LATINAS EN ACCIÓN (Latina Women in Action), empowering women isn't just about offering counseling, survivor support, and other services out of their three offices—it's about being an active and visible presence in the community. Whether it's the Women's March downtown, meetings with legislators in Springfield, or family festivals in Pilsen, the regal purple T-shirts make Mujeres an instantly recognizable force to be reckoned with.

"Mujeres has always been very rooted in advocacy," says Fanny Cano, development and communications manager. "It's our way to ensure that the best interests of the community and the clients we work for are being represented."

Founded in 1973, Mujeres bills itself as the longest-standing Latina organization in the country, serving more than 8,000 clients every year in English and Spanish. The founders recognized the need to help Latinas and their families in their own language and in ways that resonated culturally, but the communities served haven't always been receptive. The history of Mujeres is marked by what the organization describes as battles against "politics, social stigmas, and even personal threats." After a couple years being volunteer-run, the first staff was hired in 1975.

Today, the Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault programs follow clients from ini-

tial intake, to legal advocacy, to individual and group counseling. All Mujeres' offerings are free or low-cost, and free childcare is available while clients are onsite accessing services.

Other services include a 24-hour domestic violence help line, after-school programs, referrals to medical and financial resources, leadership development, and citizenship workshops out of offices in Pilsen, North Riverside, and South Chicago. And, of course, there are plenty of opportunities for clients and members of the community to join the protests, meetings, and events that center the voices of Latinas and their families.

—KAREN HAWKINS

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SIGHTSEEING

Streeterville was named for a land-grabbing criminal

The story behind the statue



A statue of George Streeter. © CHICAGO CRIME SCENES

THE JOHN HANCOCK CENTER is a popular tourist draw, but few visitors know that the land it sits on was where a dangerous criminal hatched his notorious schemes.

George "Cap" Streeter served in the Union Army as a private, not a captain. His first wife, Minnie, left him for a life in vaudeville. He and his second wife, Maria, made plans to pilot his steamboat *Reutan* to Honduras and become gunrunners, but they lacked funding for the endeavor.

According to the Chicago Public Library's Streeterville Collection, Cap, Maria, and their crew ran the *Reutan* into a sandbar 450 feet off Chicago's near north shore on July 10, 1886, at the future site of the Hancock. Streeter claimed the area—today known as Streeterville—as the independent U.S. District of Lake Michigan. He filled the sandbar area with rubble and secured a title, then sold lots and collected taxes on them.

Streeter converted the landbound *Reutan* into his stronghold. The top half was his home, and the bottom half served as his "war room." As Chicago experienced a building boom after the 1871 fire, the land surrounding the boat had become valuable and he claimed it as his domain. The Streeterville Collection indicates that Cap's legal standing depended on an 1821 government survey that deemed his 186-acre U.S. District of Lake Michigan to be outside of Chicago and Illi-

nois boundaries. He lorded over his trash kingdom.

Using forged documents, Streeter sold property that he had dubious claim to. Police and private detectives tried to oust Cap. He and Maria responded by dousing them with boiling water or firing birdshot at them from muskets. Cap faced the courts several times and was eventually sentenced for the murder of John Kirk. A December 18, 1988, *Chicago Tribune* article claimed that Kirk was a trespassing night watchman, but a December 21, 2017, *Chicagoly* article offered that Kirk was a hired gun out to kill Cap. He was pardoned by the governor of Illinois after nine months. The Dead in Chicago website shows that Maria died in 1903 from complications following a trolley car accident.

Streeter married his third wife, Emma "Ma" Lockwood Streeter, in April 1906. The two were a match. When the Chicago Title and Trust Company tried to seize the fortress, she retaliated with a meat cleaver. Cap died of pneumonia on January 24, 1921. As he had never actually divorced his first wife, the courts would not allow "Ma" to file claims on his property.

A statue of Cap stands at Grand Avenue and McClurg Court. A marker commemorates him as "The eccentric resident who gave Streeterville its name." While it's not untrue, the description fails to capture his gunrunning and land-grabbing side. —JOE MASON



DAVID WILSON

FERAL CITIZEN

Who does this land belong to?

Inhabiting the city as shared space

THE GRIDDED CITY is ancient, popularized by the Romans but not prevalent globally until the 18th century. When land is subdivided into equal—or by a factor divisible—parcels, it helps with both administration of the area and wayfinding through it. Gridirons are imposed over topography and are unresponsive to local organization. The curve of waterways, soil-born connective tissue of place, desire paths of mammals and migratory trajectories of birds are invisible to us. We navigate land now mapped as real estate without acknowledging we are crossing native walking trails that we have renamed “Clark” or “Halsted” or “Elston.” We fail to sense the dolomite parent rock we have anchored our tallest buildings into is also weathering and mineralizing the skin of soils made richer by deep-rooted perennial grasses since paved over. This logic is superimposed onto our swampy grassy homeland—vibrant, complex social spheres shape how we perceive and navigate space, conceptualize place, relate to each other.

Many, many years ago, when village life was the norm and cities were rare, the idea of the commons was not just an idea, but a

lived practice realized in specific valued spaces. Then, we were closer to understanding our spheres of relationship and influence. We maintained common grazing lands and raised animals within our yards, we composted their manure and extra organic waste, grew extensive kitchen gardens to feed ourselves. Our animals ate our scraps, openly grazed grasses, shrubs, and trees, fed on insects and grubs. We redistributed our abundances through selling, trading, and sharing. We cached or sold useful materials to be repurposed at a later time. We realized our dependence on the people who lived near us and the skills they contributed to the functioning of the whole community. The domestic and civic spheres were something we couldn't separate, or separate from easily. We were closer to our methods of production. Closer to our waste streams. Closer to our food sources and closer to our neighbors. We were closer to land. We were closer to ourselves.

As a rural person, it took me years of living in this city to realize that when I walked out the front door of my apartment, I was in public. Not only did this make me realize I had to

dress in some socially acceptable fashion (still a challenge), but my opportunity to relate to others so different from me increased manifold and that gave me the responsibility to do so positively. It also made me realize I had to work to discover ways to find and connect to the plants, animals, and fungi that were more numerous and varied than from where I came.

Who does this land, this place, this city and all its layers—open sky, tree canopy, shrub layer, grasses, forbs and crops, top soil, subsoil and bedrock—belong to? Can we get back to this understanding of shared space as an increasingly urbanized animal? It's possible. Our decisions can and do affect our land underfoot and thus, food security, habitat conservation, living economies, community resilience, and soil health, clean water, and air. A lack of understanding that our lives depend on our biological systems results in broad-scale insecurity in all these realms.

What are we willing to risk when we don't believe our livelihoods and vitality depend on the relational pathways that connect our neighborhoods, the health of our urban wildlife, the breathability of our air and soil?

Recently, while changing trains, I noticed a woman cooing toward a pigeon trapped inside the Clark and Lake complex. We caught eyes and I slid off my coat and tried to slowly approach and tarp the frightened bird so I could release it outside. Another stranger joined in with her coat. Commuters dodged our lungings. A security officer admonished us, her leashed German shepherd growled. The kid selling chocolate bars for his charter school cheered us on. We missed several rounds of trains. The chasers and the chased panting before we all understood it was time to give up and we parted ways without ever exchanging words. The pigeon hopefully lives on.

How we perform in public, how we inhabit our city, how we navigate spaces less gridded, is a way to reclaim this connection. There is opportunity for relationship of place through participation. If we allow for a more relational dynamic to inform us, we will discover we can learn about this place. We might even start designing this city differently with our curious steps and our fullhearted interactions as first steps in this otherwise lumbering city so we can support our beingness wholly and we learn to care more deeply about each other and the land that we share because of it. It's possible. —NANCE KLEHM



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NEWS & POLITICS



Raise Your Hand Action, a coalition of public school parents, protested TIFs before the Joint Review Board on January 11. © COURTESY

RAISE YOUR HAND ACTION

POLITICS

Mayor Rahm's TIF bamboozle

The Joint Review Board creates the illusion of oversight.

By BEN JORAVSKY

For the last several weeks, the 13 or so mayoral candidates have been promising to defend Chicago's already overburdened taxpayers from future hikes to our ever-rising property taxes.

And then on January 11, the Joint Review Board gave Mayor Rahm the green light to raise property taxes by as much as \$1.6 billion over the next 23 years. Yet not one mayoral candidate showed up to the meeting to protect us.

In their defense, the candidates—like most people in Chicago—probably don't know the board exists, much less when it meets.

Welcome to another chapter in my multi-part series—the making of the Lincoln Yards TIF. Where I take you step-by-step as Mayor Rahm tries to bamboozle you into thinking it's a good idea to spend hundreds of millions of property tax dollars underwriting the redevelopment of an already gentrifying neighborhood.

All in the name of eradicating blight in low-income communities.

In chapter one, we learned that TIFs raise your taxes even if the mayor claims they don't. In chapter two, we watched Tony and his girlfriend have wild sex outside the monkey cage at the zoo.

Just kidding. That scene from *The Sopranos* has nothing to do with TIFs (lately, I have *The Sopranos* on my mind)—I was just hoping a little levity might ease the pain of getting fleeced.

In this installment, allow me to introduce you to the Joint Review Board, a Potemkin-village facade intended to give you the illusion of oversight that doesn't really exist.

To understand the board's purpose, you must remember that TIF districts force Chicago Public Schools and the park district and the county and all the other taxing bodies to raise their property taxes to compensate for the money they're not getting from the TIF districts.

We're talking about hundreds of millions of property tax dollars a year—a number that will rise if Mayor Rahm gets the City Council to create the Cortland/Chicago River

and Roosevelt/Clark TIF districts. Together, those two TIFs would siphon off another \$1.6 billion or so from the taxing bodies (at least \$800 million from schools alone) over the next 23 years.

The Cortland TIF will fund Lincoln Yards. The Roosevelt TIF will fund a project I call Rezko Field—in honor of Tony Rezko, the political wheeler who used to own the land before he went to prison for his part in a state pay-to-play scandal.

In a perfect world, the taxing bodies would be cautious before they let Rahm force them to raise property taxes only to see it get diverted to his slush fund.

The Joint Review Board is their opportunity to be vigilant. It consists of representatives of these taxing bodies, plus a member appointed by the city who's supposedly looking out for the wider public—in this case, Josh Ellis, from the Metropolitan Planning Council, a local think tank.

The board's job is to scrutinize a proposed TIF district to determine if creating it justifies the property taxes it would raise.

In a perfect world, the board would be stocked by high-ranking officials—like, Janice Jackson, CEO of Chicago Public Schools—who'd ask probing “but for” questions. That is—but for this TIF subsidy, would the land get developed?

Of course, Chicago is far from perfect. And so the board consists of lower-level bureaucrats, who ask no questions and vote yes—as told.

If you looked up rubber stamp in the dictionary, it would have a picture of the Joint Review Board—right next to a photo of the school board.

Generally, the Joint Review Board's meetings draw few observers. And usually they're held in a small, windowless room in City Hall. In the good old days of Mayor Daley, city officials set out donuts and coffee, as though they felt sorry for people who had to show up.

But at the January 11 meeting, there wasn't a donut in sight as the city moved to a larger room to handle a bigger crowd brought in by the Raise Your Hand Action coalition of public school parents.

In a nutshell, the coalition believes it's obscene to earmark hundreds of millions of dol-

lars for upscale developments in gentrifying neighborhoods when our schools are so broke they can't afford to adequately fund special education. Hard to argue with that.

The Raise Your Hand activists knew about the meeting thanks to freelance journalist Dave Glowacz, my podcasting buddy. He wrote about it on his blog, Inside Chicago Government.

Well, they certainly didn't hear about the meeting from the city—which seems determined to keep the board a secret. You can't find a mention of the Joint Review Board on the city's website.

So three cheers for Glowacz—he's like Paul Revere riding through Chicago yelling: The review board's meeting, the review board's meeting!

Roughly 80 people showed up—not that it mattered. The board voted for both TIF districts without asking any meaningful questions or answering the ones that the audience asked. Board member Josh Ellis went so far as to say he couldn't vote no, even if he wanted to, as state statute only permits the board to address whether an area qualifies to be a TIF district.

With all due respect, Mr. Ellis, you got it wrong. The main point of the Joint Review Board is to examine the impact on taxing bodies. It says so in the state law book, where it permits the Joint Review Board to consider “an assessment of any financial impact” on “any taxing district affected” by a proposed TIF. (Go to Sec. 11-74.4-3 of the good old TIF code and check it out yourself—for some scintillating nighttime reading.)

Not only has Mayor Rahm not shown how either TIF district impacts the taxing bodies (CPS included), he shows no inclination to do so anytime soon.

As the meeting ended, board members thanked people for attending—a trend they said they hoped would continue, like they were chiding citizens for not attending previous meetings.

Even though those who did show up were told that showing up is pointless as the board's just a rubber stamp anyway.

Say this for Mayor Daley—when he fed us his TIF baloney, he passed out some donuts to sweeten the taste.

And so the rubber stamp express continues—next stop's a January 24 meeting of the Community Development Commission. I'll be watching.

@joravben

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Lori Lightfoot DOUG MCGOLDRICK

MAYORAL PROFILE

Is Lightfoot really the progressive candidate?

The black and lesbian woman promises to reform Chicago.

By CURTIS BLACK

One indication that Lori Lightfoot is not your standard politician came at the end of the Chicago Teachers Union’s forum in December, when mayoral candidates were offered the chance to ask each other questions.

This has become a standard feature of political debates, and it allows candidates to launch “zingers” at each other. The next day’s headlines focused on Toni Preckwinkle’s question to Susana Mendoza about her earlier support of the death penalty and on Mendoza’s question to Preckwinkle about her soda tax.

When it was Lightfoot’s turn, she asked Paul Vallas what he thought about the changes and challenges in Roseland, the far south neighborhood where he grew up. He gave a thoughtful and reflective answer. She scored no points. It was as if she was just there to have an intelligent conversation about issues facing the city.

Lightfoot is not from central casting. If elected, she would be the city’s first black woman mayor and the first lesbian mayor. In public, she doesn’t offer oratory as much as she presents arguments. One on one, she has a quiet focus and a wit that can be affable or cutting; her eyes have a searching intensity that draws you in.

Like most of the other candidates in the race, she’s never held elected office but has an extensive background in government—in her case, in criminal justice and as a troubleshooter in some of the city’s most challenging agencies. Indeed, parts of that background—as a federal prosecutor and as head of the police department’s Office of Professional Standards—have given pause to some activists who might otherwise have been drawn to her call for “a new progressive vision for the city.”

Supporters argue that her working-class roots and what the *Sun-Times* has called the “independent streak” that’s character-

ized her career—particularly the leading role she played in pressing Mayor Rahm Emanuel to get serious about police reform—reveal the kind of mayor she would be: one who would stand up to political pressure and reorient city government to serve neglected communities.

Raised in a struggling working-class family in southern Ohio, Lightfoot credits her mother, now 90—a health-care aide who served for 25 years on the local school board—as her role model, someone who “truly was fearless,” who taught her “not to shrink from a challenge, to take on hard fights” without concern for the consequences.

After college Lightfoot worked in the Washington office of the local congressman. Then she went to the University of Chicago Law School, where her independence came to the fore. That time was “really tough,” she told me recently. Despite growing up in a small segregated town, she said, “I never felt more conscious of my race than I did in my three years in Hyde Park.” Each year saw major racial incidents “created or exacerbated” by the law school’s administration. In her third year, when she was president of student government, a friend complained about racist and misogynist comments by a recruiter for Baker & McKenzie. Despite the fact that the law firm was one of the biggest in the world—and a major benefactor of the law school—Lightfoot led a successful fight to have its recruiters banned from campus.

Lightfoot spent six years at the white-shoe law firm of Mayer Brown; in two stints there she’s worked on two lawsuits brought by Republicans challenging congressional redistricting. She now argues her interest was in promoting greater Latino representation, but in 1991 all parties agreed to a new Latinomajority district; in 2010, “Lightfoot’s filings and arguments in the case clearly contend that the map was unfair to Republicans,” according to *Crain’s*.

In 1996, urged on by a mentor at Mayer Brown, Lightfoot joined the U.S. Attorney’s Office. She was motivated in part by ➔

MAYORAL Q&A

Lori Lightfoot

IN EARLY DECEMBER Ben Joravsky interviewed candidate Lori Lightfoot. The mayoral challenger is an experienced manager and reformer and has worked at several levels of city and state government. This interview has been condensed and edited for length and clarity.

JORAVSKY: You’re one of the few mayoral candidates who spoke out against Alderman Burke when the feds came knocking at his door. What are your thoughts when you see thousands show up for his fund-raiser?

LIGHTFOOT: Look, it says a sad thing about our city: It’s not a trivial matter for the FBI to execute a search warrant on a sitting elected official’s government offices this close to an election. And yet we saw, like lemmings, a thousand people going there to kiss the ring. That says to me, we have to break from the machine-style government, the past, and move forward in a different direction. Obviously he’s entitled to a presumption of innocence, but this is not about his guilt or innocence. It is about the people of the city being entitled to have a government that actually is legitimate and working for them.

Does it annoy you when the presumption of innocence is only invoked for certain white-collar people, but so many poor black people in the west and south sides get locked up all the time without a presumption of innocence?

There clearly is a double standard in our criminal justice system. And having frankly defended a lot of people who have been wrongfully accused, they get on the conveyor belt and nobody stops to say, is this a righteous prosecution? Does this really make sense? And as you well know, we’ve paid hundreds of millions of dollars to individuals who’ve been wrongfully incarcerated, some of whom have been on death row in this state. But look, I still believe in the rule of law. It’s very important to me, particularly in these times when it’s under siege.

If you are elected mayor, what would your stance be on the chairman of the Finance Committee being a property tax attorney?

I think that there should be a prohibition on any elected or appointed official who takes outside business that is in conflict with their obligations as a public servant. That’s one of the pillars of my good government plan. We can’t restore confidence in our democratic institutions when you have people who were either not disclosing obvious conflicts, are still taking those on, and then serving a different master

other than the people of the city of Chicago. I've lost count of the number of times that an Ed Burke, or frankly a Gery Chico when he was head of the Chicago schools, had to recuse themselves because he had all these entanglements with outside business.

What's your response to Toni Preckwinkle challenging your petitions?

There's no there there—we've examined on a line-by-line basis all of the challenges, and some of the stuff, it's just frankly completely made up. Challenging pages of a petition that don't even exist. Challenging people's signatures. Like for example, my lawyer signed my petition. She challenged that. If Toni wants a fight, let's fight about the issues. My understanding is that she had 200 people working 'round the clock to put together these bogus challenges and frankly, the lawyer who lodged this complaint against us, they ought to be ashamed of themselves. It's a game that's played, but the sad thing is it turns people off from the election, from participating in our democracy.

Back in 1984 I interviewed some freshman at Northwestern University and I could not understand how somebody so young—you presume somebody at age 18 would be idealistic—could support Ronald Reagan. I presume in 1984, you were not a Reagan supporter.

I was not. But Reagan came across as this vibrant "morning in America" guy and giving people hope. So there were a lot of young people in those days that were supporting Ronald Reagan. I was not among them. I was definitely, [have] always been, a Democrat.

Do you have any sort of nostalgia for the style of Reagan and Bush as opposed to the style of Donald Trump?

There's been a lot of nostalgia, but I think what people are feeling is unease with the level of viciousness in our politics. Moderation and compromise is viewed as something that's evil and anathema to being a strong supporter of one position or another.

Look, we can't move forward together as a city, as a state, as a country, if people aren't willing to see the other person and not villainize them. I'm just hopeful that we'll get to a narrative that's about how can we solve problems of everyday citizens and move the city forward. We're going to keep doing everything we can to advance that narrative because I think it's critically important to reengaging people with government. We've lost too many people that turned us off. They think government doesn't work for them or worse, the government hurts them. That elected officials are there just to pass out the slush fund of government to friends and family. And we really need to be about a hell of a lot more in this city and in this election if we're going to take on and solve some of the tough challenges that are critically important to laying the foundation for the future of the city. 

➔the fact that the office was "almost exclusively white male" and people of color needed to be represented, particularly given the wide latitude in investigating and charging enjoyed by federal prosecutors. She also cites family history when describing her motivation. Her grandmother's husband was murdered by a Klansman in the 1920s, when "there was never any thought that the guy would face justice"; an older brother has been in and out of prison, which she has said gives her insight into the impact of crime on families.

She prosecuted violent crime extensively in addition to bankruptcy fraud and public corruption. She helped convict former 15th Ward alderman Virgil Jones of taking a \$7,000 bribe in the Silver Shovel scandal. It was the height of the war on drugs, which she now criticizes as resulting from politicians who wanted to look tough on crime without regard for the "devastating" consequences increased incarceration would have on communities. As for her role, she told me, "I was a federal prosecutor enforcing existing federal law."

Lightfoot became chief administrator of OPS in 2002 and led it for two years. A *Chicago Tribune* investigation of that period revealed a pattern of cursory investigations, sometimes involving no more than a review of police reports. Lightfoot now says she made numerous recommendations to terminate officers for unjustified shootings, and that the agency for the first time recommended firing officers charged with lying in an investigation, but the recommendations were generally rejected. The problem, she says, was that the agency was part of the department it was charged with investigating.

Lightfoot went on to be a top administrator at the Office of Emergency Management and Communications in 2014; she has recalled getting dirty looks from officers who'd been assigned to the 311 call center as a result of disciplinary actions she had recommended. In 2005 Lightfoot was appointed deputy chief of the procurement department under Mary Dempsey, in the wake of a scandal involving minority contractor fronts run by a white family close to Mayor Richard Daley.

According to the *Sun-Times*, Dempsey and Lightfoot "made waves by taking on powerful targets" including wheeler-dealer Tony Rezko, who was later convicted on corruption charges. She and Dempsey also

went after top Daley fund-raiser Elzie Higginbottom. (Higginbottom is a part owner of the *Reader*.) Mayor Daley reportedly felt they had gone too far.

Lightfoot left after a few months, concerned, she now says, that corruption wasn't being adequately addressed.

Dempsey was Daley's longtime library commissioner—she resigned after Emanuel's first budget included deep cuts for libraries—and her assistant commissioner was Amy Eshelman, who is now Lightfoot's wife. They married on the day Illinois made gay marriage legal. Dempsey is now a top donor to Lightfoot.

Lightfoot returned to Mayer Brown and in 2015 Emanuel appointed her president of the Chicago Police Board. The board was notorious for overriding disciplinary recommendations by the police superintendent. Under Lightfoot it changed course, terminating officers in 72 percent of the cases it heard. As board president she was sometimes the target of vociferous protests, particularly calls for the firing of Detective Dante Servin, who shot and killed Rekia Boyd, though at the time his case wasn't before the board.

A few months into Lightfoot's tenure at the police board, a judge ordered the city to release video of Laquan McDonald's shooting by Officer Jason Van Dyke. The U.S. Department of Justice announced an investigation of CPD, and under fire for having kept the video under wraps, Emanuel appointed Lightfoot to head a Police Accountability Task Force.

Issued in April, the task force report was scathing and systematic. "The community's lack of trust in CPD is justified," it found, citing pages of data about disproportionate shootings, tasings, traffic stops, and street stops of black residents. The report also found an "utter lack of a culture of accountability" in the department, and charged that union contracts have "essentially turned the code of silence into official policy."

From that point Lightfoot became a leading voice pushing Emanuel to move on police reform, sometimes occupying a middle ground between protestors and the mayor but often criticizing Emanuel sharply. She slammed him when he tried to head off a federal consent decree with a memorandum of understanding with the Trump Justice Department, saying the proposed agreement was "fundamentally flawed"

and "sets the police department up for failure." She pressed publicly for measures to increase the independence of the new Civilian Office of Police Accountability and called the mayor out for failing to follow through on a community oversight board. She has repeatedly pointed to the many task force recommendations that Emanuel has ignored. She criticized the proposed state-city consent decree for lacking bans on chokeholds and shooting into crowds and for failing to mandate a foot-pursuit policy. She has also been a forthright critic of the leadership of the Fraternal Order of Police.

When her police board term expired, Emanuel hesitated, but under public pressure and after a long meeting—where he reportedly pressed her about her intentions to run against him—he reappointed her.

Given that history, it wasn't a surprise that less than a year later Lightfoot announced she would run against Emanuel. She promised a progressive campaign that would challenge the status quo. She raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, much of it from the legal community—nothing near the millions Emanuel had amassed, but enough to position her as a challenger, perhaps even his foremost challenger.

But when Emanuel dropped out, several more established candidates entered the race, and Lightfoot dropped back in the pack. Lightfoot has focused her fire on County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, another black woman who casts herself as a reformer. Lightfoot charged Preckwinkle with trying to "bully" her out of the race, and as the Ed Burke scandal unfolded, she hit Preckwinkle repeatedly for her slow response.

With more than a dozen candidates, the election has a horse-race aspect that tends to overshadow the merits of individual candidates. That doesn't help Lightfoot. Her most prominent supporter, former reform alderman Dick Simpson of the 44th Ward, says "she has the background, qualifications, temperament and policies that we need in a mayor." She does seem like the antithesis of Rahm Emanuel—calm, focused, principled, and independent. The question her campaign poses is an old one: is Chicago ready for reform? 

 @curtisoblack

POLITICS

No more Joe Moore?

The 49th Ward gears up for another election with the 28-year incumbent.

By MAYA DUKMASOVA



Joe Moore © SARAH-JI

On a sunny afternoon last week, a couple of men walked into Jessica’s Western Ware, a large store stocking rainbows of cowboy boots in every type of leather, button-down shirts, wide-brimmed hats, and a variety of other clothes, shoes, and personal grooming items. They spoke in Spanish with owner Rigo Romero, 56, about getting some patches on their ripped, light-wash jeans. Afterward, Romero, who’s run the shop near the corner of Clark and Lunt in the 49th Ward for 25 years, said the alterations “keep the store open because the retail business has been so bad.”

Romero dug up a purple shoebox from underneath a glass sales counter housing a few scattered pieces of jewelry. On the back of the box he keeps a tally of his annual gross sales. In 2011 he pulled in almost \$600,000. Last year, it was about \$290,000. If this year he doesn’t see his revenue climb again, “that’ll be my last year in the business,” he said.

Around Rogers Park, businesses like Romero’s have increasingly given way to higher-end restaurants and shops serving the 49th Ward’s whiter, wealthier population. And as election day approaches, the ward is gearing up for a showdown between 28-year incumbent alderman Joe Moore, on whose watch gentrification has become a fact of life, and first-time candidate Maria Hadden. A third candidate, Bill Morton, is fighting petition signature challenges from both Moore and Hadden’s camps and is unlikely to make the ballot.

Moore, who was first elected in 1991 and who for many years had a reputation for independence from Mayor Richard M. Daley’s

political machine, has lost popularity in recent years. Increasingly, he’s been criticized as an unwavering ally of Rahm Emanuel’s who puts his political career ahead of residents’ concerns. Although he came within 251 votes of losing his seat in a 2007 runoff, this may be his toughest reelection.

Romero, who’s originally from Jalisco, Mexico, and has lived in the U.S. since 1979, said he’s not impressed by any of the candidates. Though his business has been in the ward as long as Moore’s been in office, he doesn’t feel like the alderman has done anything particularly beneficial and he doesn’t think much will change if he’s replaced.

“I do vote, usually only for president and governor,” he said. “Besides that to me it doesn’t really make a big difference. When they are running they promise so many things and it’s just like a game. . . . The alderman can be a white, it can be a black, it can be a woman, a Hispanic, honestly I don’t really care.”

He said local businesses like his have been struggling as condo conversions in buildings closer to the lake have driven out lower-income Latino families and Trump administration policies have frightened people into withdrawing money from local banks and not spending for fear of deportation. “People get scared, they stop buying stuff,” he said.

Although he’s pessimistic about the future, Romero said that if the alderman could do anything in this part of the ward it should be helping more local eateries get liquor licenses. “That will be the only thing that’ll bring people into this five blocks, going north and south [on Clark],” he said. “If there’s no restaurant with a liquor license I don’t see any changes.”

One person who appears to be intensely preoccupied with the health of small businesses in the ward is Chamber of Commerce president Bill Morton, 41. He’s faced an uphill battle getting onto the ballot with his roughly 500 petition signatures, but Morton said he’d have a good chance to win if he made it. Despite having no money in his campaign fund, he said he has “huge name recognition” in the ward and a history of community service.

I caught up with Morton at the banquet room of the Ethiopian Diamond on Clark Street—the restaurant recently lost its liquor license and had a Joe Moore sign in the window—as he was setting up for a monthly job fair he’s helped organize over the last year, dressed in gray slacks and a utility jacket.

Morton, a 16-year resident of the ward who also runs a promotional business helping recording artists get radio airtime, said his “works,” such as “small business well-being checks” and organizing against a new Target store and for rent control, have been “stunted” by Moore.

“Alderman Joe Moore has a personal grudge against me,” he said, because when he cofounded the Chamber of Commerce (which currently has about 125 member businesses) the organization didn’t seek Moore’s “blessing.”

“We did that specifically so we wouldn’t be in a position to give him any funding for his campaigns,” he said. And since then, Morton says Moore has refused to take meetings with him and the groups he’s involved in. Worse still is that the alderman isn’t doing enough to help residents with their problems, he added.

“Joe Moore is about Joe Moore, and getting reelected.”

If he won, Morton said his first priority would be to implement a weekly ward night.

“His public meetings are a dog and pony show,” Morton said of Moore. “I haven’t seen a regular weekly ward night that’s not interrupted or that’s not cherry-picking who he would like to speak with personally.”

When I asked him about Hadden’s campaign, Morton said he didn’t think she had enough of a proven track record of community service in the ward. He was also disappointed that her camp challenged his petitions, just like Moore did. Morton said that pushing Moore into a runoff is the key to beating him, and that the 2007 election proved that he’s most vulnerable when multiple candidates are on the ballot.

On the corner of Devon and Sheridan, where construction of the new Target is underway, a diverse group of seniors gathered for an afternoon viewing of *General Hospital* at the Caroline Hedger Apartments. It’s a Chicago Housing Authority high-rise that’s been a source of controversy for the city due to heat outages in the winter and persistent elevator problems. Contractors who contribute to Moore have been slammed for cost overruns and shoddy workmanship. Many of the residents were also opposed to the new Target.

Still, as a couple of elderly black women chatted over religious literature in the TV room, one said she liked Moore because he’d hosted a Christmas party for the residents in December. “He made a good impression on me,” the woman said, explaining that she only recently moved to the building from North Lawndale. “I started reading about him and he’s been alderman here for like 25 years—that says something. I don’t think people will keep voting for somebody that wasn’t doing nothing for their community.”

Hearing this, another woman standing nearby seemed unable to resist the temptation to butt in. “He got in front of a whole group of seniors who voted on using their own funds to have that Christmas party,” she said. “Alderman Moore took credit for giving us a party from our own funds.”

The woman from North Lawndale looked stunned. “Wow,” she said, in disbelief. “I think that’s incorrigible. I did not know that!”

The woman who interrupted introduced herself to me as Elizabeth M., 63, but said she



Aldermanic candidate Maria Hadden, 37, with her partner, Natalia Vera; Hadden's headquarters at Morse and Greenview MAYA DUKMOSKOVA



didn't want to share her full last name for fear of "possible repercussions. The incumbent has a way of singling people out and knocking them down as if that's just a loudmouth individual," she explained.

Elizabeth, who said she's Puerto Rican and has been living in Rogers Park on and off for ten years, also made clear that she's volunteering with Hadden's campaign and that she's a member of the Jane Addams Seniors in Action PAC. She said it's unfortunate that Moore gets access to the CHA building as the alderman but that the other candidates aren't allowed by CHA to campaign inside. "They're not allowed to do any politicking on CHA property," she said. "[Moore] can have all these bingo games and stuff and put [his] name on it."

The woman from North Lawndale—who said she's also 63 but that she didn't want to share her name because she's so new to the building—was still processing the story about the Christmas party. (CHA later confirmed it

was indeed funded through its allocation for resident-selected activities.) "I will not open my big mouth again about Joe Moore because he had just totally deceived me," she said.

Elizabeth said she shouldn't blame herself, and that it's hard to fact-check Moore when his version of events is the only one you hear. "You have to make sure you understand that sometimes he will just lie to you, to your face, to put himself ahead," she said.

I asked how things were going with the Target construction. Elizabeth shrugged and pointed out the sidewalk closure. To go north on Sheridan people coming from Devon have to cross six lanes to the other side. She said it was particularly inconvenient for Caroline Hedger residents in wheelchairs and with walkers or canes. "Usually the construction is such so there are pedestrian walkways and people aren't inconvenienced," she said. "Here the priority is for the developers to get whatever they want. Especially if they're contributing to [Moore's] campaign fund."

There about Moore, especially this feeling that he's out of touch with ward residents, is what's fueled Maria Hadden's campaign. Headquartered in a brightly lit storefront on the corner of Morse and Greenview, she's attracted more than 300 volunteers to knock on doors and staff a phone bank. Hadden, 37, is tall, with short, tight curls, big, expressive eyes, and a face that easily slips into a smile. She has a casual demeanor and often says "whatchamacallit" as she searches for the right word.

Hadden began her campaign in late 2017, after having lived in the ward for 11 years and grown disenchanted with Moore's representation. Nearly 3,000 people signed her nominating petition—11 percent of the 27,000 registered voters in the ward—and she's developed a base of fervent supporters who, like her, believe Moore's transformed from a firm, independent voice in City Council during Richard M. Daley's term into a rubber stamp for Rahm Emanuel.

Moore was the first elected official in the country to implement participatory budgeting, and in 2009 Hadden joined a ward group figuring out how to spend the more than \$1 million in aldermanic "menu money" from the city. She still remembers going to the first meeting. "It just sounded like democracy." The experience eventually led her to start two non-profits that consult with local governments on how to implement participatory budgeting and otherwise improve civic engagement.

The first time she met Moore, though, Hadden was far less impressed. She'd moved to Rogers Park in 2007 and bought a condo right before the housing market collapsed. The developer absconded, leaving her and 18 neighbors in a half-finished building with unpaid bills. (The story of her building was documented in a 2009 episode of *This American Life*.) She went to one of Moore's now-defunct ward nights and gave a PowerPoint presentation about the problems she and her neighbors were facing and their ideas of the kind of assistance the alderman could provide.

"Alderman Moore nodded off over his fast-food dinner in front of me. . . . Wendy's, I very distinctly remember," she said. "I thought 'Wow, we might lose our homes, things are terrible, we've been defrauded, what do we do?'"

Eventually, Hadden and her neighbors made it out of the crisis, and a staffer of Moore's, ➔



Rigo Romero, 56, owner of Jessica's Western Wear on Clark Street; Bill Morton, 41, an aldermanic candidate whose petition signatures were challenged by both Moore and Hadden and founder of the Rogers Park Chamber of Commerce MAYA DUKMOSKOVA

NEWS & POLITICS

continued from 11

Anne Sullivan—who would later be fired by Moore, allegedly for raising alarm about ethics violations in his office—helped them figure out how to settle the developer’s debt with utility companies. Nevertheless, Haden says, over the years she’s only seen Moore get more complacent. She read the 2015 election, in which Moore trounced pro-*foie-gras*, borderline libertarian Don Gordon by double the number of votes, as a sign that a third of the ward was ready to vote for “anybody *but* Joe Moore.”

Hadden promises to restore the 49th ward’s independent credentials. She doesn’t want the city to give long-term leases of public land to corporations for \$1 and plans to play hardball with developers, from whom she’s refused to accept campaign donations because she doesn’t “even want the appearance of being compromised.” She says she also plans to be more attentive to the needs of local public schools and not support charter school expansion in the ward, as Moore has.

When I asked why her camp had challenged Morton, she said that it wasn’t an easy call. Ultimately, though, she decided it was the right thing to do because he had signatures from people not registered to vote in the ward. “If you can’t meet the technical requirements and do the work—how seriously are you taking it?”

Despite Morton’s theory that Moore will be weakest in a runoff, Hadden says she’s got the best chance to beat the incumbent. Plus, realistically, she’s only got the money for one election. She’s gathered more than \$100,000 in her coffers, mostly from small donors and a few unions. Her biggest backer—notwithstanding unsubstantiated rumors that she was getting money from Alex Jones’s publicist, which she suspects were spread by Moore’s people—is Gabe Gonzalez, another candidate who dropped out of the race before petition filing time.

As she prepared to head out for an evening of door-knocking after a quick taco dinner delivered by her partner, Natalia Vera, Hadden said that she felt a “responsibility to come through” for all her supporters and the rest of the ward.

Up on the 7700 block of North Hermitage, Moore and longtime political aide (and off-duty ward employee) Wayne Frazier huddled in front of a courtyard apartment building entrance. As gusts of icy wind whipped around, Moore, dressed in a gray suit

and Mackintosh, peered at a printout of registered voters under the light of Frazier’s phone, then tried to find corresponding names on the buzzer.

One building entryway didn’t seem to have any listed voters still living there. He had more luck next door.

“Hi, Ms. Williams? Alderman Joe Moore,” he said merrily when a short, thin black woman opened her door. “Just stopped by to say hello and see if there’s anything my office can do for you? Anything you want your alderman to know about?”

Williams asked what new projects he was putting into Rogers Park. “Well, we just got some more affordable housing lined up,” he began, “We’ve got, um, about 54 units of affordable housing for low and moderate income families over at Clark and Estes where that vacant lot is. We’ve got a new Target coming in. I don’t know if you know anyone looking for jobs but we’ve got a job fair for the new Target coming up next week. And there’s also in that development 111 units of housing, 65 of them will be CHA housing. So we’re bringing in affordable housing, new jobs for the community.”

The whole spiel sounded at once rehearsed and rusty, like maybe Moore had it prepared but hadn’t practiced saying it often. Williams asked him to “keep us informed” and said she was already on his e-mail list. He gave her a campaign flier. “There’s an election coming up in February and I’m on the ballot again and I would love to have your support,” he said. “Can I count on your support?”

“As always you can,” Williams said before closing the door.

Moore and Frazier hit one last building on the block, where several residents only spoke to him through closed doors. One yelled that he needed to do something about the rats in the alley behind the building. Frazier made a note of it.

This block was in a precinct that delivered him the second-best results in the last election, but the door-knocking was still a slog. Moore reflected that when he first got into politics, canvassing was easier. People were less distrustful, more likely to open a door or answer a phone call. He claimed that he tries to knock on doors a couple of times a week; his campaign manager told me that he’d be out between 4:30 and 6:30 that day. But though I joined him and Frazier at 6:00, the three buildings I saw with them were they only ones he went to that evening.



New Target under construction (red) with a senior housing building in the background

MAYA DUKOSKOVA

Whether or not he’s really campaigning as much as he says, Moore’s staff certainly is. Everyone I spoke with in the ward had encountered his canvassers or received a call.

Sitting in a closet-sized back room of the 49th Ward Democratic organization storefront at Greenleaf and Ravenswood, amid filing cabinets, shelves, computer servers, and framed images of “A Visual History of the Democratic Party” and the Kennedys, Moore appeared more at ease. He leaned back in a computer chair and slalomed affably through questions easy and hard, his button-down shirt gaping ever so slightly at the apex of his belly.

Does he have a grudge against Morton?

“I rarely think about Mr. Morton.”

Did he fall asleep in front of Hadden?

“I was diagnosed with sleep apnea. It’s been treated and I don’t do that anymore.”

Did he claim credit for the Caroline Hedger Christmas party?

“I showed up but I didn’t claim credit for it,” he assured me. “I will claim credit for the Thanksgiving Day dinner that we provided for them. I hope they enjoyed that.”

Does he regret sending Rahm that e-mail asking what he could do to help him deal with the Laquan McDonald scandal?

Apparently not. “I felt he was being unfairly accused of covering up and I don’t like anyone being unfairly accused, no matter who they are.”

Why doesn’t he have a weekly ward night?

“I used to do them and they ended up being people coming, to the extent anyone came,

looking for jobs,” he explained, adding that he considers himself to be among the most accessible aldermen in the city. “Ward night was becoming an employment night and I didn’t feel it was the best use of my time. Anyone who wants to see me—there’s no problem setting up a time to meet.”

Moore acknowledged that Hadden is a formidable opponent. “I’ve had some tough elections, I’ve had some cakewalks,” he says of his seven terms in office. “This is closer to a tough one.” But he added that he, like Morton, thinks Hadden lacks a proven track record of caring about Rogers Park. If the voters give him one more term, he said, he’d focus his energy on improving the participatory budgeting process and bringing in more affordable housing—he even said he’d work in City Council to limit the influence of aldermanic prerogative on affordable housing construction citywide. His plan for the upcoming debate was “to remind people of all the good I’ve done,” he said. “I’m not just phoning it in, I’m working as hard, probably harder than I ever have in my tenure as alderman.”

And what if he lost? What would Moore do then?

“Oh I’ll just curl up in a ball and cry,” he joked. Then he gave what seemed like an earnest answer. “I don’t really have a plan B right now, but I do know that I’m a pretty talented person, pretty passionate,” he said. “I’m sure I’ll be engaged in some manner and form but I have no idea what that would be as of now.”

@mdoukmas



Clockwise from top left: chicken curry laksa; mee goreng; penang lobak; Kuala Lumpur pan mee; Malay rojak  ELISHA KNIGHT

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Bingo knows what you need: Taiwanese cheese tea and Malaysian noodles

Resistance is futile.

By MIKE SULA

Pretty soon you're going to have to confront cheese tea.

It's not as disturbing as it sounds. This successor to Taiwanese bubble tea is relatively new to Chicago, but in its various forms it offers a sensory appeal similar to sipping milky coffee through lip-lathering latte foam.

But the word "cheese" is a hang-up in terms of branding. Cheese tea doesn't involve suspending Limburger in Lipton's. Rather, the dairy aspect of it is an aerated, milky, lightly salted cream cheese raft, ladled atop your tea of choice—primarily black, green, or oolong, though like much of the universe of milk teas, the possibilities seem endless. Chicago's bubble tea pioneer Joy Yee has adopted this variant, and a Chinese-based chain, Tsaoaca, opened a shop in Chinatown last month.

But the pioneer for Chicago cheese tea is a nascent local chain, Bingo Tea, which opened its first outlet last August in Chinatown Square. The principals, long-time friends Albert Moy and Bin Chen, say they spent a year in Taiwan, learning the ins and out of the specialty along with a course in baked goods like pillow mango, matcha, durian, and ube breads.

Seems like a reasonable pairing that might work in more than a few neighborhoods around town and certain suburbs. But last month when they opened their second location on Argyle Street, they had something else in mind: Malaysian food.

Up until recently, that was one cuisine—a synthesis of Chinese, Indian, Indonesian, ➔



continued from 13

and European colonial influences—that was lacking in the city's culinary firmament. After Chinatown's Penang went up in smoke in 2008, you had to haul out to the Arlington Heights location for your *laksa* and beef *rendang*. Asian Noodle House in Hoffman Estates picked up some slack, but there have been encouraging developments over the past two years. First, there was Logan Square's terrific Serai, which reintroduced the city to mainstays like laksa, rendang, and Hainanese chicken. Then came Family House (now Tea Leaf Garden) on Devon, offering nearly equal parts Burmese and Malaysian food.

And now there's Bingo Tea Malaysian Café, which offers a neat menu of Malaysian noodle, rice, and snacky dishes to complement their vast tea options. In the kitchen is Sonny Lim, a former Penang chef, who keeps things somewhat familiar with chicken or tofu satay with peanut sauce, chicken wings, and roti *canai*, the flaky paratha and chicken-potato curry combo that turns out to be an ideal partner for one of the tall, creamy teas. Less common, *penang lobak* is a kind of deep ground pork and taro sausage marinated in five-spice, with a bean curd casing ideally swiped through searing, funky housemade sambal; and the Malay *rojak* is a sweet-savory fruit salad of mango, apple, jicama, and cucumber dressed in a thick soy-chili sesame dressing.

It seems enough to idle with snacks such as these, but with more substantial platters like cold, poached Hainanese chicken, or *nasi lemak*, a set of curried chicken and pandan-scented coconut rice, meant to be mingled at your pleasure with hard-cooked eggs, dried anchovies, and sambal, you could make an afternoon of it.

Bingo's ancillary Malaysian menu is dominated by noodles, like seafood or shredded laksa drowning in coconut curry, or *mee goreng*, dry, stir-fried soy-saturated egg noodles with fat, just-cooked shrimp. But it's the Kuala Lumpur *pan mee* that picks up some of the depth missing from those other dishes: wide flat noodles bathed in soy, with fish balls, ground pork, and shrimp, topped with dried anchovy, all meant to be combined with a murky chicken-anchovy broth served on the side.

Still, these dishes are almost afterthoughts to Bingo's tea menu, which spans fruit teas (dragon, yuzu lemon honey, black grape), milk teas (buckwheat matcha, caramel black), and more subdued honey drinks. All are customizable with a variety of additions (boba, red

beans, lychee jelly), but presiding above all is the “milk cap,” or “sea salt milk foam,” which is how the principals behind Bingo have re-branded cheese tea. You can top pretty much any drink with it, hot or cold, but I think its best expression is its most minimal: slowly descending into one of the black, green, or oolong teas, no sugar added. Don't poke a straw through it. Sip through the lid's aperture so the liquid passes through the foam, offering a hint of cheesecake and salt ahead of the tea's tannins. If you're inclined to post a cheese foam mustache selfie, you're far from alone.

Bin Chen believes in the versatility of cheese tea, envisioning Bingo outlets specializing in Japanese or Thai food—whatever the hypothetical neighborhood requires (I propose cheese tea and egg curry in each terminal at O'Hare). Whichever direction it goes, the folks behind Bingo clearly have an eye for what's underrepresented around town. After laksa and mee goreng, it's probably best to move on anyway. By the dubious mathematics of cultural reporting, three Malaysian restaurants make a trend. 

 @MikeSula

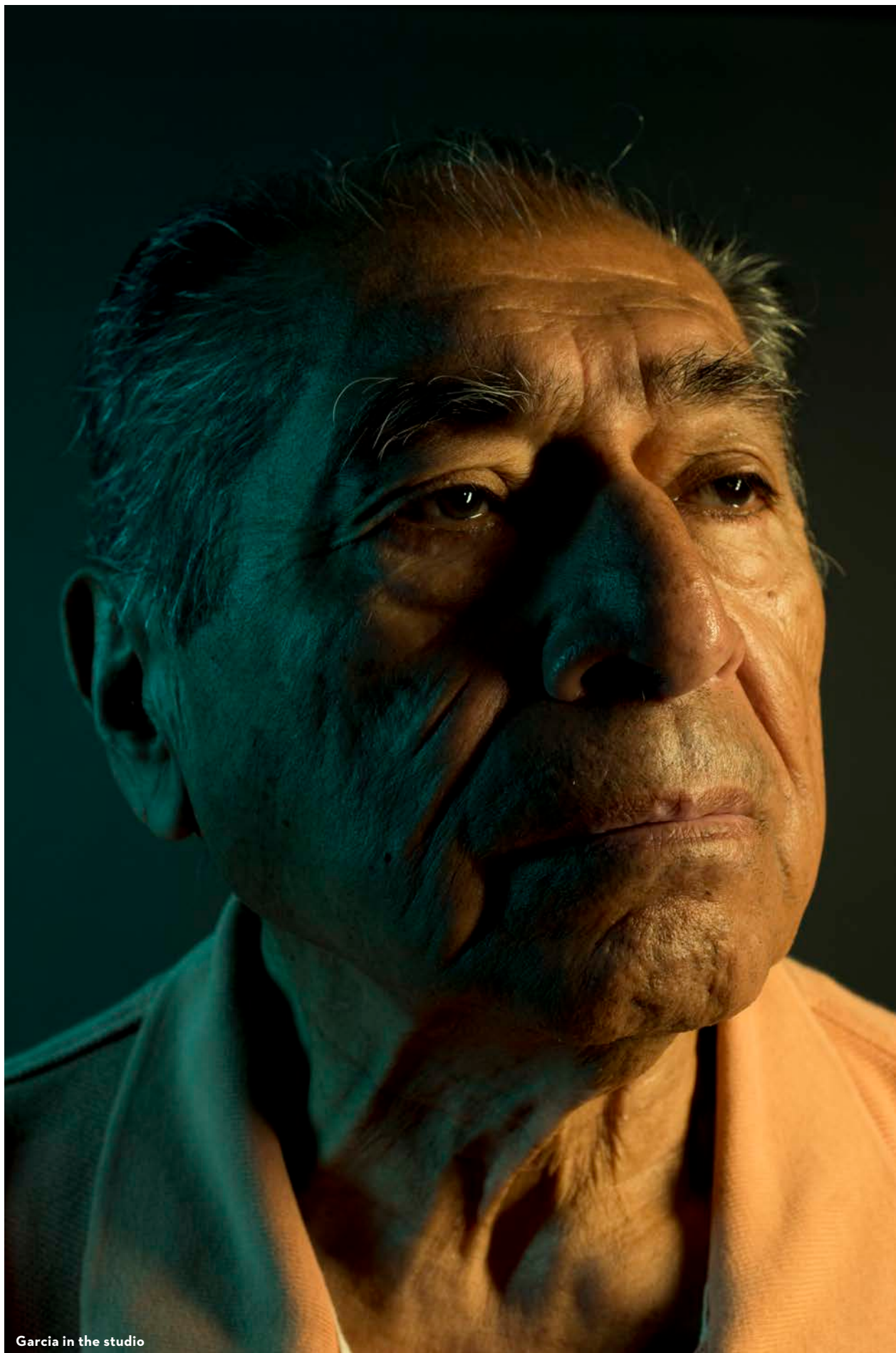
Chicken curry laksa  ELISHA KNIGHT



Dew cheese tea  ELISHA KNIGHT



Kuala Lumpur pan mee  ELISHA KNIGHT



Garcia in the studio



Garcia as a young man, 1948 📷 COURTESY OF JOSE GARCIA

Portrait of my grandfather

Story and Photos
BY GONZALO GUZMAN

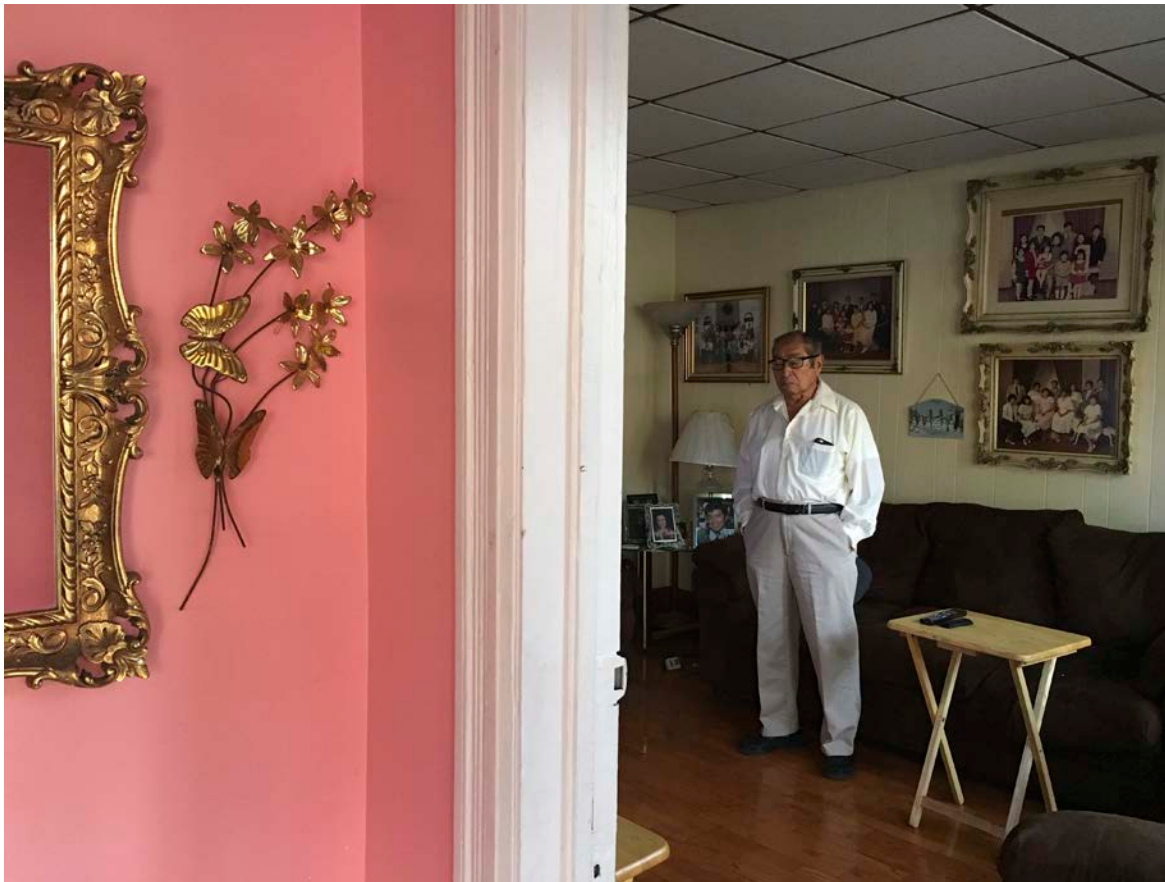
My 88-year-old grandfather Jose Garcia only has two pictures from his childhood. Both are with his older cousin Carlos, whom he affectionately calls his brother. Born in Mexico in 1930, my grandfather never met his father, and, when he was still very young, his mother left him in the care of her sister. His Aunt Margarita raised him, but it was Carlos who made sure he stayed in school and out of trouble. It was also Carlos whom my grandfather followed to the United States in 1954 at the age of 24 in search of a better life. ➔



The first portrait of Garcia



Garcia in his bedroom

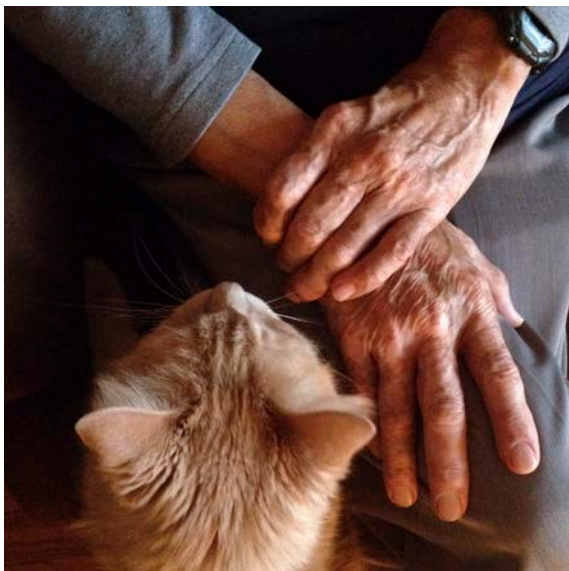
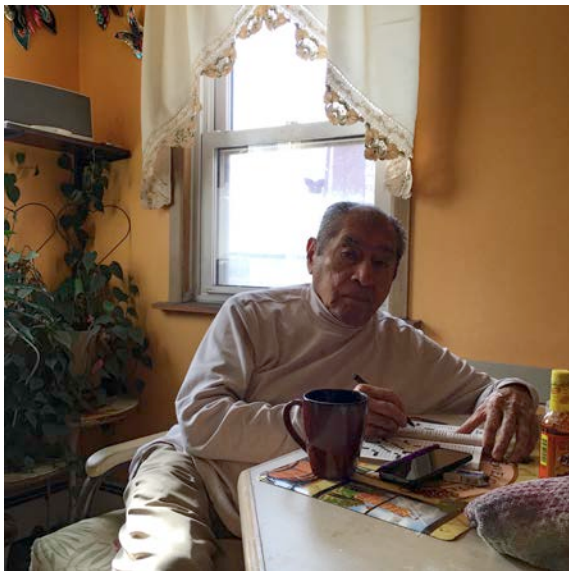


Garcia watching television

continued from 15

My grandfather has always been a hard-working man. Shortly after immigrating to San Antonio, Texas, where he met my grandmother, Mary Zuniga, he moved to Chicago in search of better jobs. She would join him a few months later, right before he was drafted into the navy. He didn't speak English when he first started working, but he studied by watching American movies on the ship. After his tour, he continued his education while working full-time in the Fisher Body Plant for General Motors in Willow Springs to support his family. My mother is one of nine children, and all of them were put through private school to ensure them the best chance of success as adults. This meant seven-day work weeks at the factory were the norm for my grandfather. He was always working. Just work, work, work.

My grandmother was the talkative one. Now that she has passed, there is so much about my grandfather that we still don't know. "I'm a simple guy," he said, when I asked him to tell me more about his life. "Just work, that's it." Maybe he thinks his life is uninteresting. Maybe he just doesn't remember.



Clockwise from top left: Garcia at the dining room table doing crossword puzzles; Garcia getting ready for bed; A large photo of Garcia hangs in the living room; Garcia with the family cat, Tigger.

I left my home in North Carolina in 2011 to study photography and stay in the Bridgeport house where my mother was born. It felt strange to live in a home with so much history, to hang out around the same places my mother did when she was my age, and to live with a man whom I knew very little about. I remember when I first moved in, it felt at times that we were more like roommates than family. His kids had moved out and my grandmother passed, so he had grown accustomed to living on his own. We soon began to have late-night talks over wine and weekend brunches, which we still have today. As semesters went by, I learned about the man who my grandfather is now. Still, much of his past remains a mystery.

It was not until 2015 that I pointed my camera at my grandfather in an intentional way. He was always a willing subject, and his gaze seemed to pierce through each image effortlessly. Most shoots were impromptu and shot quickly on my phone before posting to Instagram with the title “Portrait of My Grandfather” and a sequence number. He now has hundreds of photographs of himself. The story of his life hidden behind each stare.

When I asked him how he felt about this project, he simply said, “It is nice . . . something to remember me by.” 

 @GonzGuzPhoto



The author with his grandparents, 1992



I Know My Own Heart

CODY VON RUDEN

across so naturally and easily that it's easy to forget how radical Lister's perspective was in the society in which she lived. Likewise, as Lister's lovers, Jessie Ellingsen, Eleanor Katz, and Lauren Grace Thompson find nuance in the various layers of jealousy and support and platonic, unconditional love shared by a group of women very much committed to finding their own way to happiness, judgements and street glares be damned.

Onstage, the format Donoghue uses to dramatize Lister's written excerpts makes for an inherently more passive theatrical experience than contemporary audiences are used to, and I wonder if all of the simulated sex acts would have been seen as more scandalous during the play's early-90s debut. Counterintuitively, the action here is less interesting than the straight recitations of journal entries, which feels like a subprime use of the stage as this story's medium.

I KNOW MY OWN HEART

Through 2/10: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3:30 PM; also Wed 1/30, 7:30 PM, Pride Films and Plays, 4147 N. Broadway, 866-811-4111, pridefilmsandplays.com, \$25-\$30, \$20 students, seniors, and military.

THEATER

The favourites

I Know My Own Heart looks back on the life of diarist, mountaineer, and queer icon Anne Lister.

By **DAN JAKES**

Last year, the York Civic Trust caused a minor stir with its efforts to pay homage to the Yorkshire author, mountaineer, and English queer icon Anne Lister. Outside the church in which, in 1834, she declared a marital commitment—with the church's blessing, remarkably—to Ann Walker, a rainbow-bordered plaque recognized Lister as a “gender non-conforming entrepreneur.” Some saw the descriptor as one that devalued her contributions to the lesbian community. It's since been updated to “Lister . . . of Shibden Hall, Halifax, Lesbian and Diarist.”

After getting to know Lister a bit via Emma Donoghue's chamber drama *I Know My Own Heart*, which is inspired by Lister's extensive volumes of diaries (the naughty-bits coded in a flamboyantly complicated enigma of symbols and Greek letters), I can't help but wonder

what, if anything, she'd think about the plaque row if she were around today. Based on her witticisms and unyielding societal defiance, I imagine she'd either a) not care one way or the other or b) have quickly and casually written 30 pages of brilliant nonfiction prose about it. Or maybe she'd agree with her girlfriend Marianne's clunky summation: “Well, you're sort of a . . . female gentleman.”

Director Elizabeth Swanson's production of *I Know My Own Heart* for Pride Films and Plays marks the U.S. premiere of Irish-Canadian Donoghue's 1993 drama. Fans of Yorgos Lanthimos's new film *The Favourite* may find some satisfying similarities in Donoghue's tribute, which is another semi-fictionalized account of badass women undergoing the messy, exciting venture of rewriting the unofficial rules of relationships in English high society. While *The Favourite* pits its protagonists against one another in an 18th century

Mean Girls dynamic, *I Know My Own Heart* follows a different trajectory, one that blurs the lines of monogamy and friendship and sex among a community of women who ultimately have each others' backs.

And yet, even as Anne blazed her own trail when it came to how and who to love, the trappings of heteronormative relationships seep in and cause trouble in interesting ways. “It is strange that the kisses are always best after we have quarreled,” Lister observes about one of her many partners.

Donoghue admittedly takes sweeping liberties with Lister's biography (including a complicated intra-family affair), but many of Lister's onstage Carrie Bradshaw-style soliloquies are verbatim passages from her writings. As Lister, Vahishta Vafadari achieves a colloquial, confident charm that comes

Typically when directors and scenic designers place the action in the middle of two blocks of house seat rows, the view of audience members across the way is intended to heighten the communal sense of reactions and ground them in the live event. But on opening night, Swanson's staging achieved the opposite effect, instead brightly lighting the three of the seven viewers across the stage who were sound asleep. And I suspect, based on the sounds behind me, that the dozy energy in the house wasn't limited to the folks on the other side of the stage.

Still, there's much of value here to be learned about Lister's outlook and philosophy, even if Swanson's production is more of an intellectual accomplishment than a visceral and dramatic one. At its most fun, *I Know My Own Heart* escapes its stuffy collars and labyrinthian complications of relationships altogether and depicts the joys and solidarity of 19th century women enjoying each other's company, having an eye only for the present. It's there and there alone, Lister tells us, that we have any agency at all—in love or anything else.

@DanEJakes



THEATER

Rent controlled, out of control

A black ex-cop's life veers into disarray in an apartment *Between Riverside and Crazy*.

Rent-controlled apartments offer a stability rarely seen in metropolitan areas. They sure don't exist in Chicago. But what happens when an apartment is the only stability one has? When we meet Pops, we learn the answer is not much, outside of a safe-ish place to sleep and drink.

Stephen Adly Guirgis's play *Between Riverside and Crazy*, produced by Redtwist Theatre and directed by Rinska Carrasco-Prestinary, has aged poorly since it won the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for drama, particularly in its portrayal of women.

Pops (Kenneth D. Johnson), an ex-cop, shares his apartment on Riverside Drive in New York with a slew of characters, including his son, Junior, and a sobered addict with PTSD, both formerly incarcerated. Pops is battling his own demons, and also a court case against a rookie cop who shot him six times while off-duty and un-uniformed. But it's been eight years, and neither the value of black lives nor the consequences for police brutality have increased. Compounded by the recent passing of his wife, Pops's life is in peak disarray—and it shows.

The set, designed by Nicholas James Schwartz, immerses the audience in that disarray. The walls of Pops's home are lined with off-center family photos. A dead Christmas tree skirted with faded newspapers stands in a corner; the kitchen counter is buried under spilled meds and unopened bills. Part of the audience sits in the living room, across from the couch, in what becomes an inadvertent splash zone when whiskey becomes the choice comfort and weapon.

The cast is strong, but the women in particular are limited by the script. Almanyia Narula, who plays Junior's girlfriend Lulu, leans too hard into ditzy and scatter-brained, bumbling around the apartment in revealing clothes and forgotten responsibilities. Though this dated portrayal feels decades old, the guilt and shame internalized by POC cops is palpable—especially in a world where they can still be shot without consequence. —YASMIN ZACARIA MIKHAIL **BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY** Through 2/10: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Redtwist Theatre, 1044 W. Bryn Mawr, 773-728-7529, redtwist.org, \$35-\$40, \$30-\$35 students and seniors.

Premodern drama

At 400 years old, *Fuente Ovejuna* shows its age.

The challenge with Spanish baroque drama—and other putative classics that are not Shakespeare—is how not to make doilies out of them. If the peasants in Lope de Vega's little garrison town of Fuente Ovejuna represent a medieval way of life in conflict with the incursion of new values, and if the immoderate brutality and sexual appetites of the Commander of the Order of Calatrava delegitimize his authority as an agent of Juana and Alfonso of Portugal, further justifying the imperial reign of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, all of that has to not sound like I just made it sound, which is the sound of who cares, get on with it, that crown is made of paper, what's he talking about.

Despite great energy and ensemble feel, the actors in Terry McCabe's treatment at City Lit Theater can't seem to get a lot of traction with the language or the narrative. Part of the issue is the translation McCabe is working from, which is such a bone-literal piece of public-domainery that it sounds like it originally existed as a crib to help people read the play in Spanish. All in all, the production ends up, as a great many historical revivals do, at war with its own baggage: the best laughs are off the line; the most endearing moments of acting are the partially mugged asides that barely relate to the actual story. —MAX MALLER **FUENTE OVEJUNA** Through 2/17: Fri-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 2/4 and 2/11, 7:30 PM, City Lit Theater, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, 773-293-3682, citylit.org, \$32, \$27 seniors, \$12 students and military.

Unstable elements

I Call My Brothers explores the anxiety of being “other.”

Amor is a normal dude living his life in Stockholm—a big brother, a cousin, a friend, a man in love, a university graduate. Amor is a chemistry nerd who memorizes the periodic table by assigning each element to a person he knows (he's ununtrium himself, “a temporary name for an unconfirmed synthetic element”). Amor is either a romantic or a stalker, probably both, creepily obsessed for 19 or 20 years with his childhood neighbor Valeria. She moved away but still takes his calls. If it had not been for the bombs, Jonas Hassen Khemiri's *I Call My Brothers* might have been a light piece about who picks up when you ring them, set during that brief, heady era when people actually talked on their mobile phones.

St. Nicholas HELEN MAYBANKS

The bombs, though. If the details matter, there actually were two bombs in Stockholm in 2010, which killed the suspected bomber and a few others. But details only matter if you care to distinguish one event or person from another, and Amor is, before all other details, to all eyes including (incidentally? consequently?) his own, brown.

I Call My Brothers is a portrait of the anxiety that results from the invisibility and hypervisibility of being “other”—the unfair responsibility given to any member of such a group, the unintended election to said group, and the impossibility of simply being an uninflected individual, no matter how outré or annoying. Salar Ardebili is a mercurial Amor, leading a strong cast directed by Abhi Shrestha at Interrobang. —IRENE HSIAO **I CALL MY BROTHERS** Through 2/2: Thu-Fri 8 PM, Sun 3 and 8 PM, Mon 8 PM, Rivendell Theatre, 5779 N. Ridge, 312-219-4140, interrobangtheatreproject.com, \$32, \$16 students and industry.

Vampires of London

In *St. Nicholas*, a self-loathing white man searches for meaning.

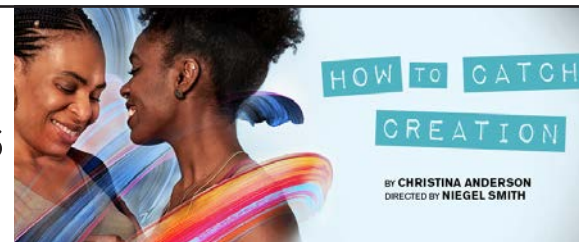
Self-loathing men occupy the center of Conor McPherson's world—and he gives them plenty to hate about themselves. That's particularly true for the unnamed narrator in McPherson's 1997 solo play, in which a jaded

and repulsive theater critic abandons his life in Dublin and falls in with a gang of vampires in suburban London. They bestow upon him the effortless charm he's never had, and in return he uses his newfound power to ensnare young victims for his hosts.

McPherson's sinuous-yet-acidic two-act narrative provides a showcase for any actor, and surely Brendan Coyle, who played the long-suffering valet Bates in *Downton Abbey*, will be an audience draw for this Goodman import from London's Donmar Warehouse. But Coyle brings far more than telegenic star power to his midlife monster of a writer manqué. Aching hunger drives his actions, from his attraction to a young actress in a mediocre production of *Salome* to a growing realization that the only way out of being undead is finding a story of his own.

There's nothing obvious or heavy-handed in Coyle's performance (directed by Simon Evans), which brings out many witty shades in his dissolute-but-desperate hack. He's a clinical and sardonic observer, even—or especially—of the critic's own human failings. But he also makes us believe that it's possible to reject the easy path of conscienceless cynicism for the darker, deeper journey toward meaning. —KERRY REID **ST. NICHOLAS** Through 1/27: Tue-Wed 7:30 PM, Thu 2 and 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodman-theatre.org, \$31-\$85 (subject to change).

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COMICS

It's a horse! It's a tank! It's *Battlepug*!

Mike Norton's epic tales of blood and drool

By MARK PETERS

Imagine a giant, adorable seal demolishing a village and a barbarian killing an evil version of Santa Claus. Imagine Steve Bannon and Mitch McConnell having a face-off in which their faces literally slide off. If you can't imagine such things, veteran comic-book writer and artist Mike Norton can. His Eisner-winning *Battlepug* will be available in a massive "Compugdium" January 23 from Image Comics, which also published a collection of Norton's Trump satire *Lil' Donnie* last year.

Battlepug, launched as a webcomic in early 2011, tells the story of the Warrior, a Conan the Barbarian type brawler who roams a sword and sorcery realm populated by enormous animals. His sidekick is a giant pug known to readers as Battlepug but to other characters as Sprinkles, a name given to him by Bryony, a foulmouthed little girl who is also a powerful mage and ally. They fight the magic-hoarding beast mage Catwulf and other threats. The "Compugdium" consists of the first five volumes of *Battlepug*, which Norton considers "the origin story." To say there's no other comic like this would be an understatement as big as Sprinkles.

Norton began *Battlepug* during a career crossroads. "I'd been working for years for Marvel and DC doing *Superman* and *Spider-Man*," he says. "I'd never done anything on my own. The first thing that popped into my head was, seriously, Conan riding a pug."

Why a pug?



"I've always liked animals," Norton explains, "I babysat when I lived in Memphis. My boss bought a pug puppy for his wife for her birthday, and it was supposed to be a surprise. So I was supposed to keep it for a weekend while he set the whole thing up. I was in love with them after that. I said, I have to have one for myself, just because it is a ridiculous animal. It literally would not exist in nature without us interfering, so the idea of this animal being a fierce, like, warrior-thing just entertained me in my brain.

"I kind of have an absurdist sense of humor," he adds, perhaps unnecessarily. He also now has two pugs: Moe and Ninja.

Battlepug started off as a webcomic; only after it caught fire did Dark Horse Comics and now Image publish print editions. This was not the result of an elaborate marketing plan. "I didn't have the patience to take it to publishers to beg them to print it," Norton says, "so

I immediately put it online, and that's worked out for me. It's more of an impulse thing than it is a strategic thing."

Lil' Donnie has a slightly different origin story: "It was impotent rage, that's all it was," Norton says. "I was drawing comics on election night and watching this stuff come in, and I just felt a sickness to my stomach. I couldn't believe what was happening. And it was just a coping mechanism. Things I wanted to yell, and I figured if I put it online, people would have to look at it rather than me just being grumpy all the time. . . . It's an exercise in creative spite."

Lil' Donnie has been a standout in the overstuffed genre of Trump satire—it's like classic *Doonesbury* with smoother art and geeky references to comic book characters such as Etrigan the Demon and Mr. Myxlpplx. Real-life characters are transformed: Kellyanne Conway is a wraith emerging from a skull, while

Mitch McConnell is a human soul trapped in an Appalachian apple core doll. Meanwhile, President Obama steals sandwiches off the White House desk while name-dropping the deep state. Despite the strip's success, Norton has slowed down on the comic because he's suffering from a condition more common than the flu: Trump fatigue.

"The nonsense is so absurd that even making a joke is not as funny as the actual thing that's happening," says Norton. "So I have to do really weird things like make strange movie or comic book references that nobody is gonna get anyway. So it's a lot more difficult now. Plus, it's been three years now, almost, and I'm just tired of it. I'm tired of this guy."

Norton, 45, is originally from Jackson, Tennessee. He studied graphic design at the University of Memphis. He moved to Chicago 18 years ago to work in comics as art director for Devil's Due Publishing. Three years after that, he was drawing comics full-time and has been ever since. In addition to numerous work-for-hire jobs for Marvel and DC, in 2012 Norton co-created the Image horror comic *Revival* with Tim Seeley, one of his studio-mates at Four Star Studios in Ravenswood.

That studio is part workplace and part geek heaven, featuring comics galore, more action figures than a toy store, and some spectacular art, including a massive print from Jack Kirby's psychedelic *Lord of Light* adaptation. A giant whiteboard sits in Norton's area, with story beats mapped out for the new arc of *Battlepug*, much like an upcoming season of a TV show. (Image will publish the story this year as a monthly series.) "It's just a bunch of things that happen from issue to issue," Norton says modestly and also accurately.

Like a lot of artists, Norton has made the move to digital art, though *Battlepug* was originally done with traditional pencil and ink. Making a comic is still a time-consuming process with many steps, but since he only writes for himself, he feels more free to use shorthand than he would if he were writing for another artist: "I don't write like most writers in that I don't actually write stuff. I jot notes down in corners and things like that. It's pretty dumb. It's the digital version of writing on legal tablets, I think."

This modesty is characteristic of Norton. Even when he won the Eisner for *Battlepug*, the highest honor for a comic-book creator, he didn't let it go to his head. His acceptance speech was short and to the point: "This is only going to encourage me to do more of this crap." **W**

COMEDY

The funniest women alive!!!

It's a Guy Thing explains everything you ever needed to know about dudes.

By JACK RIEDY



SANDY HONG

Catherine Cohen, Patti Harrison, and Mitra Jouhari, who all work together on the show *It's a Guy Thing*, consider one another the funniest women alive. The three of them have contributed to nearly every part of the modern comedy landscape: writing for AMC and HBO, acting in *The Big Sick* and *Broad City*, and performing in East Village cabarets, *The Tonight Show*, and now the Hideout as part of the Tomorrow Never Knows festival.

The trio first crossed paths at comedy festivals: Jouhari met Harrison at Bellwether Improv Comedy Festival in Columbus, Ohio,

in 2011, and Cohen at Scotland's Edinburgh Festival Fringe in 2013. In 2015, she introduced Harrison and Cohen to each other at the Annoyance's now-closed Brooklyn location. "Mitra and I fell in love by candlelight in Scotland. Patti and I fell in love instantly at the Annoyance Theatre," Cohen says. "We were watching hilarious dudes going absolutely off," she adds, her voice caked in sarcasm.

Cohen and Jouhari started *It's A Guy Thing* as a monthly show in Brooklyn in September 2015. The title was a phrase they used as a running joke while they were coworkers at a mattress store. "I had a phrase in my head,"

Cohen says. "I go, 'Isn't it funny to say *it's a guy thing*?' " Harrison stepped in to co-host when Jouhari was traveling, and soon joined the show permanently.

The focus of *It's A Guy Thing* originally hewed closely to its title. "The premise is that we're three dum-dum girls who don't understand guy stuff and we need people to explain it to us," Jouhari says. This format allowed for a variety of comedy styles, from stand-up and improv to lectures and slideshow presentations. One recurring bit was a slideshow called "Guys of the Month." "It was a vessel to share pictures of random real people that we googled

ARTS & CULTURE

and use their face as a joke in our PowerPoint," Harrison explains. "It made us laugh really hard and no one ever liked it," Cohen adds. "We kept doing it for eight or nine months."

In the ensuing years, the show has strayed from its original premise and now consists largely of musical comedy. "We got a lot more confident individually," Jouhari says, "and that let us have more fun and be more playful as a group." The song "All-American Guy" is a great example of their collective voice. The trio sings about looking for men who meet the blue-eyed, football-throwing cliché of the title, until the song twists into a satire targeting the pervasiveness of rape culture: "Statistically, he'll find you." Cohen credits Harrison as the GarageBand expert behind their backing tracks, though they have also used karaoke tracks pulled from YouTube. "I genuinely, no humility here, bring nothing to the table when it comes to music composition," Jouhari adds.

Each show consists of the group's favorite bits from past performances and one new routine written that day. "We have a very intense process where we only meet the day of the show to write the show," Cohen says. As ➔

Melville Finding America at Sea

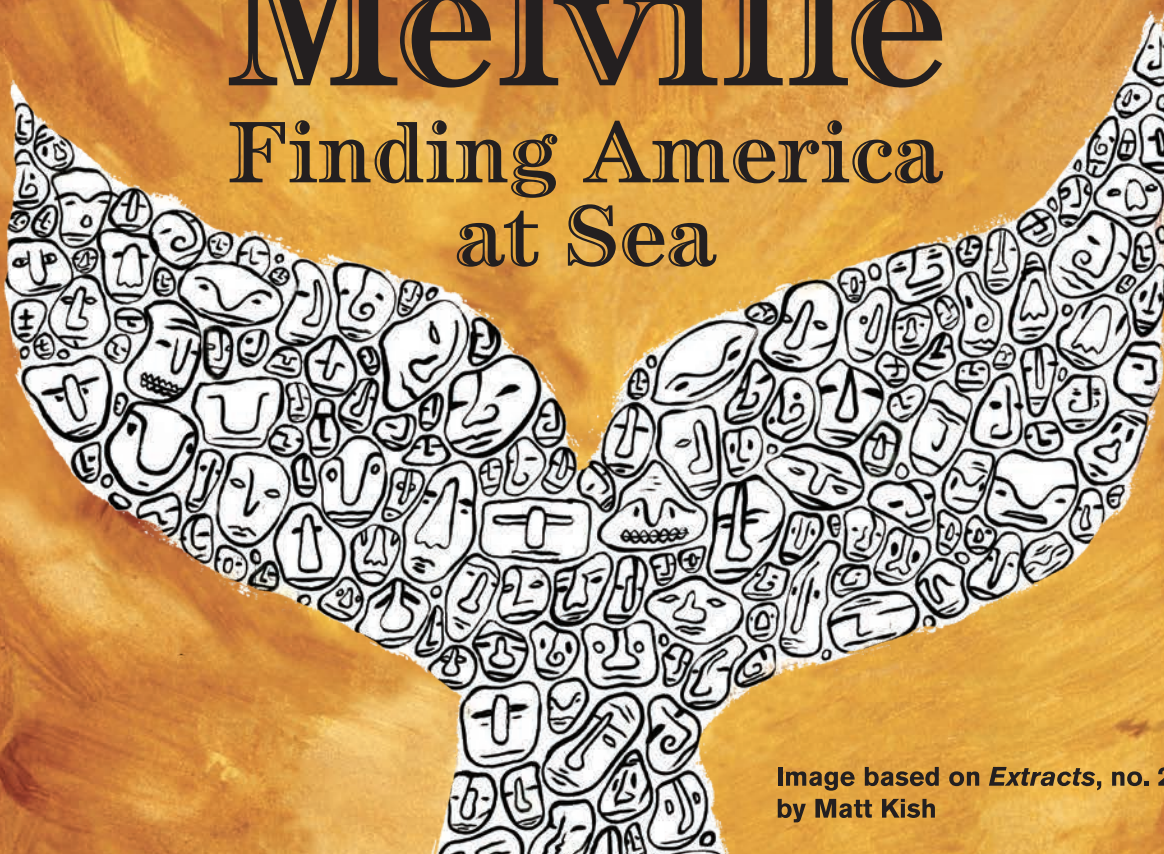


Image based on *Extracts*, no. 21
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ARTS & CULTURE

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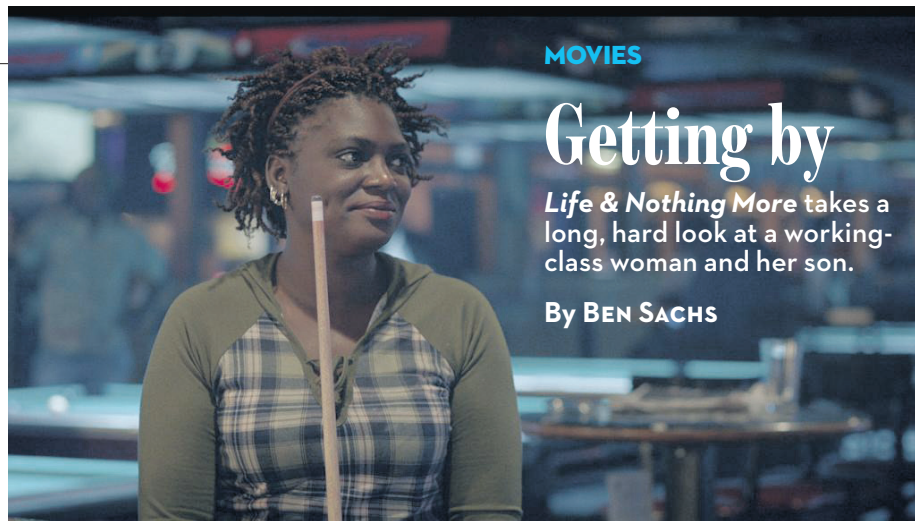
their schedules have become crowded with performances and other commitments, the three comedians have looked forward to each iteration of *It's a Guy Thing* as time set aside for collaboration.

The comedians recently moved out of Brooklyn: Jouhari and Harrison to Los Angeles, Cohen to Manhattan. Although they rarely work in the same physical space, their common sensibility is evident even on a cross-country conference call. For the Chicago show, Harrison says, “there will be one new thing that we do and then a million old things that we’ve done ten million times but we are still unable to remember.” When asked to preview their material, they launch into a lengthy list. Harrison promises laborers building a boat onstage and an enormous puppet operated by Cohen, who counters, “That’s not a puppet, that’s this guy I’m seeing.” Jouhari says she will not be in attendance, preferring to participate remotely “like a principal on the announcements.” “I know I’m gonna be really tired,” Harrison says, “so I’m probably not gonna stay for the whole thing.”

This month’s show will be the first *It's a Guy Thing* in Chicago. The trio is looking forward to performing for a fresh audience since very little of their material has surfaced online. “We’re all three business majors and the one thing we learned in business school is the best way to sell a product is to make it unavailable,” Harrison jokes. “You know how hard it is to get things online these days,” Cohen adds. The trio won’t rule out writing a filmed project together in the future, but their increasingly crowded calendars, not to mention their geographic distance apart, prevent any solid commitments.

They’re also eager to bring their show to Chicago, though it’s not the first time in the city for any of them. This show will mark Jouhari’s fourth performance in a year at the Hideout, a place she calls “one of the best venues in the world.” Harrison announces she is in a long-distance open relationship with the Bean, and she waits a beat before clarifying “the Millennium Bean.” Cohen last visited for Pitchfork Festival, where she lost her shoes. “This trip better be fucking amazing,” she says. “It’s up to you, all of Chicago, to fix it. And to find my shoes.” 

 @jackriedy



MOVIES

Getting by

Life & Nothing More takes a long, hard look at a working-class woman and her son.

By BEN SACHS

Though it takes place in Tallahassee, Florida, the independent drama *Life & Nothing More* might be described as a foreign film. Antonio Méndez Esparza, who wrote and directed it, is a Spanish émigré who’s lived in the U.S. for a number of years, and he brings to the drama an outsider’s perspective that often suggests that of an ethnographer. He likes to keep his camera at a slight remove from the action, resulting in visual compositions that balance one’s sense of characterization with a sense of social milieu. The nonprofessional cast improvised all of the dialogue, and their contributions heighten the ethnographic vibe. Méndez Esparza, often employing static long takes, allows vernacular speech patterns to shape the action as much as any of the physical behavior. Moreover, the dialogue is so consistently robust that you may not realize for a while that *Life & Nothing More* contains no music. Even the passages of silence, which register as punctuation in the drama, contribute to the musicality of the speech.

The film begins on a bus, where a 30-something woman named Gina (Regina Williams) sits with her 14-year-old son, Andrew (Andrew Bleechington). Méndez Esparza situates his camera near the driver’s seat and points it back so that we take in all of the passengers—it’s only through the dialogue that we realize the mother and son are the main characters. Gina is upset with Andrew for reasons that don’t become clear until the next scene; when she demands that he get up and move to another seat because she doesn’t want to look at him, her anger, presented out of context, is almost comic. We only understand why she’s so angry when the director cuts to a courtroom where an offscreen judge

explains that Andrew has been breaking into parked cars. The judge sentences Andrew to probation but makes it clear that he’s on thin ice. Méndez Esparza then cuts to the bus ride home, the camera in the same position as before, with mother and son already sitting apart.

For roughly the next 20 minutes, *Life & Nothing More* centers on Andrew in his nascent efforts to improve himself. Méndez Esparza shows the boy meeting with an adult family friend who stresses that he needs to stay out of trouble, doing lawn work with other at-risk youth, and attending a class where an officer instructs a room full of young men about how they can avoid jail time. In between these scenes, we see Andrew caring patiently for his three-year-old sister while Gina is away at work; however brief, these shots speak to the boy’s inherent good nature. Andrew doesn’t seem like a criminal, but at the same time, Méndez Esparza doesn’t provide any clues as to the boy’s aspirations apart from not committing crimes. Viewers might assume that he’s simply impressionable, having made bad decisions as a result of peer pressure. In any case, the adults in his life try to capitalize on his impressionability, filling his head with lessons on the need to do right.

Only later, during a scene of Andrew’s meeting with a school counselor, does Méndez Esparza reveal that the boy’s father is in jail for aggravated assault. Andrew divulges this information only when pressured, and even then he’s coy about the details—and about the fact that he doesn’t want to maintain a relationship with his father. Still, one sees that he remains his father’s son when, shortly after the scene with the counselor, Andrew and his friends break into another parked car at

LIFE & NOTHING MORE ★★★

Directed by Antonio Méndez Esparza. 114 min.
Fri 1/18 - Thu 1/24. Gene Siskel Film Center.

Life & Nothing More

night. It’s a short scene, but it makes a strong impression, showing how the boy is trapped in a cycle of criminal behavior that started when he was too young to recognize it.

From here, *Life & Nothing More* switches gears and follows Gina for a while. We learn that she works in a diner and earns so little that she can’t afford to make necessary repairs on her car. (During her conversation with an employee of an auto body shop, we intuit that even the \$55 fee to have the car towed is a big expense for her.) She lives, it seems, in a permanent state of exasperation. When a stranger, Robert (Robert Williams), appears at the diner one night and begins making advances toward her, she rejects him flat out—clearly she doesn’t have the time or the patience for another man in her life. Yet Robert keeps coming back to the diner and gradually wears down her resolve, and the two enter into a relationship. This relationship becomes the focus of the narrative, eventually overwhelming the story of Andrew’s fraught path to self-improvement. That’s not to say that Méndez Esparza loses the other plot; rather, he shows how Gina, in devoting some much-needed attention to herself, loses sight of her son. This oversight will catch up with her in the film’s tragic final act.

On a similar note, the film is defined as much by what Méndez Esparza doesn’t show of American society as by what he does. The director shot *Life & Nothing More* during and shortly after the 2016 presidential election, yet barring a single conversation between Gina and her coworkers about the candidates and a shot of them watching TV news on election night, the larger political context remains outside the bounds of the story. When Gina and her coworkers complain that life won’t change for them regardless of who gets elected, the filmmaker suggests this is all we need to know. These characters see their concerns as too immediate to be resolved by change at the national level—staying financially afloat or out of trouble is more than enough to occupy their attention. In his vivid depiction of the characters’ daily lives, which slowly becomes immersive in spite of the detached camera-work, Méndez Esparza invites us to share in their perspective. 

 @1bsachs

★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS

COLD WAR ★★★★★

In Polish with subtitles. R, 88 min. Fri 1/18–Thu 1/24: 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:15 PM. Music Box Theatre.

FILM

Cold War

MOVIES

A passionate *Cold War*

Pawel Pawlikowski chronicles a love affair that blazes across the Iron Curtain.

By **ANDREA GRONVALL**

Could there possibly be a more overworked, banal question of the cultural moment than “What’s your passion?” It’s so ubiquitous, from job interviews to dating apps, that it has supplanted the equally risible “What’s your sign?”—as if anyone could instantly recognize real passion in a society as corporatized, monetized, and intimacy averse as ours. (As pervasive as social media is, sharing everything with everyone is the opposite of intimate, which means private and personal.) Actual passion is incendiary, all-consuming, nonconformist, and frequently antisocial; it can be visionary, as in the arts, or self-destructive, as in *l’amour fou*, mad love. Polish director Pawel Pawlikowski’s latest film, *Cold War*, chronicles—stopping just short of celebrating—one such crazy love, an affair that blazes across a postwar European landscape already strewn with too many ashes, and grimly divided by the Iron Curtain and closing borders.

The attraction is immediate when Zula (Joanna Kulig) and Wiktor (Tomasz Kot) first meet in 1949 rural Poland. He’s a refined

composer and musicologist in his 40s, chafing under Stalinism as he catalogs traditional folk songs and auditions performers for a new touring folk troupe. She is one of the hopefuls, a vibrant 20-something scrapper determined to escape her dead-end lower-class origins. They are mismatched in terms of temperament, sensibility, pragmatism, ethics, and drive, but their sexual connection is so strong that their liaison survives her first betrayal (when she spies on him for a Communist party climber) and the many other disputes and recriminations that follow throughout their 15-year-long on-again, off-again relationship. Their tempestuous union, their ceaseless longing for each other—even when, out of expedience, they enter different partnerships—puts them in the company of such mad lovers in Romantic literature as Catherine and Heathcliff in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* and the obsessed suitor in Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*.

Romanticism, the hugely influential artistic, intellectual, and political movement that emerged in the late 18th century as a reaction

against the rationalism of the Enlightenment, extolled emotion, nature, folk art, individual freedom, and nationalism, and privileged artists over their works. The Romantic ideal of an artist was not someone who existed to create a commercial product but someone who lived to express him- or herself through creativity. During the Romantic era, political repression drove many Polish artists into exile. Like the lovers in *Cold War*, who repeatedly leave and return to Poland, director Pawlikowski has experienced exile and celebrates individualism and unfettered emotion. His work is consistent with the Romantic tradition in that his subjects are often deeply personal, and made more so by his deliberative methods of filmmaking, which run counter to industry norms.

Even though he won the Cannes Film Festival Best Director prize for *Cold War* and the Best Foreign Language Film Oscar for his previous film, *Ida* (2013), it’s doubtful that Pawlikowski will ever be a true industry “insider” (or would ever want to be). When he begins filming, his screenplays aren’t “locked,” and they are usually much shorter than the envisioned running time of the completed film. He starts filming with maybe 60 pages or less, shoots for five consecutive days, takes a day off to review footage and recharge his batteries, and then writes some more on the seventh day. He might do as many as 30 takes until he gets what he wants. He is constantly revising, discarding, and resculpting: process is everything. It’s how he remains true to his personal expression.

That, of course, is not how Hollywood makes movies, where a script needs to be final before shooting begins or else the project risks budget overruns. That’s also why few American movies from 2018 are as strong or innovative as *Cold War*, which also incorporates a half-dozen lacunae between chapters, gaps in the years between Zula and Wiktor’s sojourns across Poland, East Berlin, Paris, Yugoslavia, then back to Paris and Poland again. Because Pawlikowski relishes ambiguity, he expects the viewer to fill in the blanks and imagine what happened offscreen. He claims his inspiration was Michael Apted’s *Up* series of documentaries, beginning with *Seven Up!* (1964), for which Apted interviewed a number of British schoolchildren, then returned to record them every seven years thereafter to track how they’d grown and how society had changed.

This might make it sound as if watching *Cold War* is work, but it’s not. The movie has

intrigue and some pointed gallows humor as the lovers try to flee detection and Communist interference. Mostly, it throbs with music and vitality and is sexy as hell. From the austerity of postwar Poland and Soviet concert halls to the bop, jazz, and early rock ‘n’ roll nightclubs in 1950s Paris, the film feels authentic. It’s a story very close to Pawlikowski himself, as it’s based loosely on the lives of the real Zula and Wiktor, his parents, who spent 40 years dodging repression, moving about Europe, loving, fighting, marrying, divorcing, and then remarrying before they died in 1989, just prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Most of Pawlikowski’s feature films are in some way autobiographical and reflect his attempts to process his parents’ legacy, his own life in exile, and his return to his native country. When Pawel was 14, his divorced mother married an Englishman and pulled her son from his relatively happy life in Poland to resettle in the UK; Pawlikowski’s first feature, *Last Resort* (2000), is about a dumped Russian refugee mother and son who are stranded in a small British seaside town. *My Summer of Love* (2004) follows the doomed passionate lesbian affair between two rebellious English teens who reject their suffocating family circumstances and class distinctions. *The Woman in the Fifth* (2011) was filmed in Paris after Pawlikowski moved there from England following the death of his Russian wife, and concerns a divorced American writer trying to pull his life back together. Pawlikowski, who as a youngster was nominally a Catholic, didn’t find out until later in life that his paternal grandmother was Jewish and died in Auschwitz; the feature that he made upon his relocation to Poland, *Ida*, deals with a young orphaned novice’s discovery that her parents were Jews killed in the Shoah.

Maybe only those who have lived through so much trauma, destruction, and reconstruction have the innate ability—or willingness—to self-immolate on the altar of undying love. Knowing firsthand how the fallout of *l’amour fou* can impact innocent bystanders, Pawlikowski is not positioning his *Cold War* protagonists as role models. What the film is doing is recognizing their indelible life force and originality; it’s a *cri de coeur* hurled toward an increasingly hidebound and emotionally stunted era of Western civilization, where a word like “passion” can be reduced to a watered-down cliché, useful only for commodification. **✎**

FILM

MOVIES

Lars von Trier loves women more than you ever will

In *The House That Jack Built*, he argues that he just has a really funny way of showing it.

By ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

The centerpiece—soul, even—of every Lars von Trier film is a scene of compelling destruction. *Breaking the Waves* (1996), a fictional tale, has Emily Watson on a stretcher believing that the love of her life needed her raped and beaten in order to survive himself. In the 2003 documentary *The Five Obstructions*, von Trier's real-life mentor Jørgen Leth is served an elaborate meal in the red-light district of Mumbai. The local poverty serves to highlight Leth's wealth and privilege, of course, but we watch something more complex erode in the relationship between the two Danish filmmakers—respect, maybe, or admiration, and the combination is gutting and awful. *Melancholia* (2011) famously depicts the end of everything, full stop, and the film both begins and ends with the most aesthetically pleasing images of our own demise yet viewed onscreen. That the sites of destruction are often women's bodies has led to frequent accusations of misogyny on the part of the filmmaker.

The House That Jack Built is the story of a man who finds relief from anxiety by killing a series of people—women, mostly—in increasingly bizarre ways. As his means of killing become more elaborate, his confidence grows, and soon he is straightforwardly telling both intended victims and police officers that he is a murderer. The scene of elaborate destruction we build to is entirely predictable if you know anything whatsoever about the architect-turned-serial-killer narrative or the

filmmaker. Because it is the centerpiece of the film, its soul, it satisfies when it emerges, but we glimpse it only for a second, as if von Trier himself were bored by the only moment of ingenuity he's conjured in nearly a decade.

Of course, viewers have by then slogged through two hours narrated by one of the least ingenious serial killers to ever enter the public imagination. The genre is riddled with men—usually—and their theories about humanity, as well as their plans for its manipulation, control, or extermination. (Films about female serial killers do exist, but we generally call them “rape revenge fantasies” and dismiss the genre as “emotionally driven” and thus unworthy of inclusion in the “real” serial killer genre.) Von Trier's titular character Jack, played by Matt Dillon, is no different. He believes he is better than everyone else because he is an artist, beyond morality, gifted with the ability to elicit aesthetic pleasure and thus improve all of humanity. He is a narcissist, like every other serial killer.

The film follows a standard *Divine Comedy* plotline: a man confesses his crimes as punishment for them in the afterlife is about to commence. Jack's Vergil is Verge (Bruno Ganz), and, as in Dante's original, he is a moral being who condemns Jack for crimes against women as a class and humans as a race. In fact, the film switches genres somewhere amid Jack's self-congratulatory reminiscences of the four distinct murders that organize the tale, and we lapse into a filmic essay. Von Trier lobs moments from his own work—the *Melancholia* and *Breaking the Waves* scenes mentioned above are included—into the string of images of great works of architecture and painting and archival footage of Glenn Gould playing the piano that Jack's narration alludes to. The montage also includes “great” works of, uh, genocide because, you know, serial killers love that shit, but more importantly because

von Trier wants us to read Jack as the enfant terrible filmmaker himself, known to create great scenes of compelling destruction. *The House That Jack Built* is von Trier's response to his critics.

Yet von Trier is no remorseless killer. In fact, the tired *Infernoesque* structure is the filmmaker's way of acknowledging universal order: there is a right and a wrong, he wants us to understand, and certain acts—acts that he himself has depicted on film and therefore has perpetrated in real life in order to film, and which his critics have called into question—are profoundly, eternally wrong. Jack flaunts his crimes to passersby, to victims, to on-duty officers of the peace, yet they continue. Von Trier has suggested that this is a nod to Trumpism, but it more basically functions as a restoration of order. Von Trier is comfortable crossing boundaries when boundaries are clearly marked. In American culture right now, however, the boundaries between right and wrong have become quite blurry. Von Trier feels the need to remind us of the centuries-old distinction between right and wrong so we can properly condemn him for crossing those lines. Look at this horrible man! He hated women before the president did!

Aesthetic sins, too, unfold: ham-fisted flashbacks, often of events that occurred onscreen mere moments before they are relayed to Verge, are the most grievous. There's a weird recurring bit cribbed from the video for Bob Dylan's “Subterranean Homesick Blues” that awkwardly seeks to ally Jack with, I dunno, super famous people or something. (Von Trier's grasp of the U.S., where he has never been, has always been shaky.) The archival footage is frequently replayed, too, so that by the end of the film we are left with the impression that we have just watched a fairly standard B-grade horror movie remixed by a first-year art-school student who feels he has something

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT ★
Directed by Lars von Trier. R, 152 min.
Now streaming online.



to say. And that we have watched it twice in a row. Because that's the way it was intended to be screened.

An actor of limited range, Dillon capably depicts the self-aware psychopath. In fact, he underplays the emotionless Jack so thoroughly that his greatest line is an affirmative “OK,” delivered to his girlfriend/victim Jacqueline, both cast in the flat, uninspired tones of the 1970s color palette the film is staged in. He calls her Simple as part of his torture regime—it's also von Trier's self-aware nod to critics accusing him of misogyny. Von Trier doesn't like simplicity. When an early draft of *Antichrist* was completed, the filmmaker wasn't satisfied with the volume of hate it directed at women, so he sought out an expert on the subject to push the misogynistic aspects further. Of course the real experts on misogyny are all women, so von Trier found misogyny expert Heidi Laura and paid her to offer advice on more effective means of depicting the deeply seated despisement of women in his film. Would a misogynist do that? (It's a serious question.)

Simple is, therefore, a smoke screen. Walk through it and you're left with Jack, who has already killed someone with a tire jack (get it?), and now he's emotionally moved by and ultimately kills someone he calls Simple but who is really named Jacqueline, the feminine version of himself. “If one is so unfortunate as to have been born male, then you're also born guilty. Think of the injustice in that!,” Jack even tells Jacqueline. It's both the big reveal that the women von Trier abuses in his films are all versions of himself and an invitation to imagine what sort of film we might have been left with had she been granted protagonist status in a “real” serial killer film, *The House That Jacqueline Built*.

But von Trier didn't make that film. Instead he tossed off this puerile attempt to silence his critics, using without examination every tired trope from the male serial killer movie genre there is, and then layering another trite trip-to-hell story line over it. The filmmaker's work was interesting—fascinating, occasionally repellent, but often excellent—when misogyny and misanthropy were driving forces. Here, examined, we're given instead raw narcissism, humdrum in the end, a soul worth glimpsing only for a second before casting aside. Nothing to behold. 

 @superanne

FILM



Paternal Rites

MOVIES

RR Antoine and Antoinette

Jacques Becker worked for Jean Renoir as an assistant director on six features before coming into his own as a filmmaker, and this 1947 comedy often recalls Renoir's early films in its sweet, sincere romance. Antoine works at a printing plant, Antoinette at a department store; their threadbare existence as husband and wife begins to look more promising when Antoine discovers that he holds a winning lottery ticket good for 800,000 francs. The film is fleetly, one might even say frantically, edited, but the characters are so vivid that Becker makes all his emotional points cleanly and effectively. Noel Roquevert is wonderful as the odious, mustachioed shop owner who keeps putting the squeeze on Antoinette, and Roger Pigaut and Claire Maffei are luminous as the title characters, whose greatest treasure will always be each other. In French with subtitles. **—J.R. JONES 2013 86 min. Fri 1/18, 4:15 PM; Sat 1/19, 5:30 PM; Tue 1/22, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

RR At Eternity's Gate

Willem Dafoe plays Vincent Van Gogh in this expressive biopic, concentrated on the Dutch painter's later years in Arles, France, shortly before his death at age 37. Director Julian Schnabel, a painter himself, rightly focuses on Van Gogh's most prolific period, in which the artist churned out more than 200 paintings in 15 months, with minimal dialogue and striking visual poetry. Other influential characters—Van Gogh's loving brother and benefactor, Theo (Rupert Friend) and his demonstrative peer, the French painter Paul Gauguin (Oscar Isaac)—drift into the film, reminding the painter to soak up the vivid, quotidian ephemera of his surroundings when he is, for the most part, living in solitude. Despite being in his early 60s, Dafoe is perfect for this role, his stretchy, craggy face itself a canvas on which to display the artist's tangled interior life. Dafoe fully commits to his performance, as does Schnabel to the painter's vision and humanity. The result is a conspicuous fusion of actor, director, and subject: three souls connecting, wedded to art. **—LEAH PICKETT 2018 PG-13, 110 min. Fri 1/18, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 1/19, 7:45 PM; Sun 1/20, 3 PM; Mon 1/21, 7:45 PM; Tue 1/22, 7:45 PM; Wed 1/23, 6 PM; and Thu 1/24, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

RR Beautiful Boy

Refreshingly, there are few calls to a higher power in this searing, fact-based chronicle of a horrific descent into hard drugs. Instead, in their deft adaptation of two best-selling books, writer-director Felix Van

Groeningen (*The Broken Circle Breakdown*) and his cowriter, Luke Davies (a former heroin user who went on to pen the Oscar-nominated *Lion*), help remove the stigma of addiction by focusing on the neuroscience of dependency. Steve Carell plays *New York Times* and *Rolling Stone* journalist David Sheff (author of the eponymous memoir), and Timothée Chalamet is his gifted teenage son, Nic Sheff (author of his own memoir, *Tweak: Growing Up on Methamphetamines*), a sensitive lad whose initially casual drug use morphs into a toxic cycle of lies, guilt, recrimination, and lawlessness. The leads are superb, buoyed by Amy Ryan as Nic's mom, Maura Tierney as his stepmother, and LisaGay Hamilton in a moving cameo as a parent whose unconditional love couldn't save her child. **—ANDREA GRONVALL 2018 R, 120 min. Sat 1/19, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 1/20, 4 PM. Doc Films**

RR Don't Bother to Knock

Unusually seedy and small-scale for a Fox picture of 1952, this black-and-white thriller is set over one evening exclusively inside a middle-class urban hotel and the adjoining bar. The bar's singer (Anne Bancroft in her screen debut) breaks up with her sour pilot boyfriend (Richard Widmark), a hotel guest. He responds by flirting with a woman (Marilyn Monroe) in another room who's babysitting a little girl (Donna Corcoran), but the babysitter turns out to be psychotic and potentially dangerous. Daniel Taradash's script is contrived in spots, and the main virtue of Roy Ward Baker's direction is its low-key plainness, yet Monroe—appearing here just before she became typecast as a gold-plated sex object—is frighteningly real as the confused babysitter, and the deglamorized setting is no less persuasive. With Jim Backus as the girl's father and Elisha Cook Jr. as Monroe's uncle, the hotel elevator operator. **—JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 2005 76 min. 35mm. Wed 1/23, 7:30 PM. NEIU/Chicago Film Society**

RR Inside Llewyn Davis

From a distance, this feature by Joel and Ethan Coen might resemble the brothers' 1991 farce *Barton Fink*: like the earlier movie, it evokes a specific showbiz milieu (Greenwich Village in the early 60s) as it follows an aspiring artist (a down-and-out folkie played by Oscar Isaac) who's based on a real-life figure (singer-guitarist Dave Van Ronk). Yet the broad, black humor of the Coens' early features (*Blood Simple*, *Raising Arizona*) has ripened over the years into a sadder, more philosophical brand of comedy (*A Serious Man*) that puts them in a class with Billy Wilder and Ernst Lubitsch (yeah, you heard me). Their theme here is the

same as in *Fink*—the fraught relationship between art and commerce—but their key insight is noticeably more mature: a good artist must be in the right place at the right time to succeed, whereas a truly great one makes that time and place his own. With Carey Mulligan, John Goodman, Garrett Hedlund, and Justin Timberlake.

—J.R. JONES 2013 R, 104 min. Sat 1/19-Sun 1/20, 11:30 AM. Music Box Theatre

RR Le Trou

Released alongside *Breathless* and *The 400 Blows*, Jacques Becker's 1960 film was the last great flowering of French classicism; the "tradition of quality" here goes out with a masterpiece. It's a prison-break film, based on a true story, that follows the dictates of the genre almost every step of the way but makes the conventions shine with new life and meaning. The suspense is built slowly and carefully, through finely perceived physical details and quirks of character. The obvious comparison is to Bresson's *A Man Escaped*, but Becker has none of Bresson's taste for abstraction; his film is rooted in the immediate, the concrete, the human. With Raymond Meunier, Philippe Leroy, Jean Keraudy, and Michael Constantin. In French with subtitles. **—DAVE KEHR 2003 131 min. Sat 1/19, 3 PM, and Thu 1/24, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center**

RR Loulou

Maurice Pialat's 1980 film is a study in erotic revolution; in it, sex becomes a force that shatters not only class allegiances and social patterns but even the order represented by traditional narrative structure. Isabelle Huppert is a model middle-class wife who leaves her possessive husband (Guy Marchand) for street tough Gerard Depardieu; he lives off her money, but Pialat artfully blurs the line between exploiter and exploited—it's hard to say who is using whom. The film, shot largely in handheld long takes, addresses the question of possession—of how much our society, and even the stories we tell, depends on the notion of one person's "right" to another. It's one of the most original French films of the period, and, I think, a great one. In French with subtitles. **—DAVE KEHR 1985 101 min. Wed 1/23, 7 and 9:30 PM. Doc Films**

RR Minding the Gap

Though it runs just 93 minutes, this cinemaverite documentary by Bing Liu manages to feel like an epic. Liu shot it over a few years and in that time got to know his subjects so well that he came to consider their entire lives. He also covers a lot of thematic ground—this is at once an uncommonly sensitive depiction of skateboarding culture, an elegy for urban, blue-collar America, and a sobering meditation on domestic violence. Shot in the director's hometown of Rockford, Illinois, *Minding the Gap* starts when the primary subjects, Keire (who's black) and Zack (who's white), are in their late teens and early 20s, respectively. The two young men met over skateboarding but discovered they were both abused as children and were using similar methods to cope with it. Liu follows them as they struggle toward adulthood, generating an air of great tragedy while grounding the film in recognizable everyday detail. **—BEN SACHS 2018 93 min. Liu and producer Diane Quon attend the screening for a Q&A moderated by documentarian Steve James. Mon 1/21, 7 PM. Music Box Theatre**

Of Fathers and Sons

A Syrian refugee based in Berlin, documentary maker Talal Derki (*The Return to Homs*) assumed the guise of an Al-Qaeda sympathizer and went back to his ➔

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FILM

➔ native country to make this profile of jihadist Abu Osama and his several sons. The resulting film alternates between scenes of Osama and scenes of the boys, most of whom are under the age of ten and already being trained in the ways of jihad. These latter sequences are by far the more unsettling, as the kids blindly accept whatever they're told, even bringing a youthful enthusiasm to their indoctrination. (An early scene showing the boys torturing a bird to death hints at the horrors to follow.) Derki is particularly interested in how Osama exploits his children's desires to play and be loved to make them learn the hateful teachings of Al-Qaeda; this thematic emphasis on "soft power" points to an underexplored aspect of how terrorist organizations amass followers. In Arabic with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS**
99 min. At the Music Box Theatre: Wed 1/23, 4:45 PM. At the Gene Siskel Film Center: Fri 1/18, 4:15 and 8:15 PM; Sat 1/19, 8 PM; Sun 1/20, 3 PM; Mon 1/21, 6 PM; Tue 1/22, 6 PM; Wed 1/23, 8:15 PM; and Thu 1/24, 8:30 PM.

Owned, A Tale of Two Americas

There's a rich archive of documentaries about mid-century housing policy in America, which simultaneously created suburbs and wealth from home equity for white people and ghettos and poverty for black people. There have also been plenty of films about the 2008 housing market collapse. But in this 2018 documentary director Giorgio Angelini weaves together both histories, delivering an epic yet digestible overview of the way property ownership has both constructed and corroded the wealth and well-being of the nation. Over time our racist policies have created monocultures in our built environments, and monocultures are inherently vulnerable. With long intervals of mesmerizing drone footage, clever graphics, and timely intercessions from experts and ordinary folks, the lesson doesn't taste like medicine. Ultimately, Angelini is reiterating the argument that society can't thrive in a segregated state—and this version feels like something even your most duck-sounded-minded relatives could swallow. —**MAYA DUKMASOVA** *83 min. Fri 1/18, 6:15 PM, and Wed 1/23, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

QR Paternal Rites

Most feature documentaries are expository, designed to educate, provoke, or entertain. Rarely do we get a nonfiction movie that is also an art film, such as this investigation of long-buried family trauma by Jules Rosskam, an alumnus of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a transgender male. He begins his personal essay film with a cross-country road trip he and his partner, Alex, undertake, retracing a journey his parents, Marilyn and Skip, made just before Rosskam was born. As a mnemonic device it's almost Proustian: Jules and Alex's contemporary conversations flow over home movies shot during his parents' trip, punctuated by excerpts from Marilyn and Skip's old audio-taped travel diaries. These trigger Jules's memories of the elusiveness of his father, a workaholic whose physical absence was compounded by alcohol-induced emotional distance. As Jules turns to interviewing the present-day Skip offscreen, looking for keys to Skip's obliviousness about the abuse that went on long ago under his roof, stills, animation, and hand-painted 16mm film become the canvas for the director's musings. At times painful viewing, this brave, unsparing work ends in liberating catharsis.

—ANDREA GRONVALL 82 min. *Roskam attends both screenings. Sat 1/19, 5:30 PM, and Mon 1/21, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

QR The Reckless Moment

This 1949 melodrama from Max Ophüls's post-war Hollywood period is usually overlooked in favor of the masterpieces he would realize upon returning to Europe (*Lola Montes*, *The Earrings of Madame de...*). But it's one of the director's most perverse stories of doomed love, with Joan Bennett as a bored middle-class housewife whose daughter accidentally kills her sleazy suitor, and James Mason as an engagingly exotic Irishman who attempts to blackmail the mother. Naturally, they feel a certain attraction. Ophüls spins a network of fine irony out of the lurid material; Bennett is surprisingly effective as a typical Ophüls heroine, discovering a long-suppressed streak of masochism. —**DAVE KEHR**
1985 82 min. 16mm archival print. Fri 1/8, 7 PM. *Doc Films*

RR The Spirit of the Beehive

ARK A sensitive 1973 mood piece by Victor Erice centered on small children in a Spanish village in the 1930s. The extraordinary child actress Ana Torrent (*Cria*) made her debut here at the age of five. Much in the film is derivative, but Erice excels in precise evocations of childhood feelings—there is one dumbfounding moment of lyrical, joyful horror. In Spanish with subtitles.

—**DAVE KEHR** 1985 97 min. 35mm. Sun 1/20, 7 PM. Doc Films

The Upside

A nicely subdued Kevin Hart stars in this American remake of the French hit *Les Intouchables* (2011), playing an ex-con who becomes caregiver to a wealthy quadriplegic despite having no experience in caregiving. Bryan Cranston plays the employer, and he and Hart develop an agreeable rapport in spite of Jon Hartmere's hackneyed script, which abounds in cheap sentiment and telegraphs every emotional payoff far in advance. The leads aren't just charismatic, but nuanced as well; Cranston makes sure not to let his character's self-pity and physical helplessness define who he is, while Hart brings sly intelligence to what might have been a cliché role. Director Neil Burger, for his part, moves the story along fairly briskly, refusing to let the film's schmaltzy weigh it down. This is nothing remarkable, but it

could have been a lot worse. With Nicole Kidman and Golshifteh Farahani. —**BEN SACHS** PG-13, 125 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, Ford City, New 400, River East 21, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11

RR We Won't Grow Old Together

Few directors used the jump cut to more potent effect than Maurice Pialat; his films hurtle from one volatile scene to the next, skipping over anything that might suggest emotional stability in the characters' lives. This 1972 drama—his second theatrical release and an unlikely commercial success in France—depicts the on-again-off-again relationship between a brutish aspiring filmmaker (Jean Yanne) and his younger mistress (Marlene Jobert), with many of the details drawn from Pialat's own life. The film is infuriating by design, focusing almost exclusively on the couple's arguments and reconciliations, yet it never feels predictable, thanks to the acute characterization and intimate, seemingly spontaneous performances. Though often painful to watch, this is an edifying portrait of codependence mistaken for love. In French with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 2012 102 min. 35mm.

Tue 1/22, 9:30 PM. Doc Films

ALSO PLAYING

Glass

Director M. Night Shyamalan combines characters from his previous features *Unbreakable* (2000) and *Split* (2016) in this sci-fi drama about a superhero who pursues a criminal with multiple personalities. With Bruce Willis, Samuel L. Jackson, Spencer Treat Clark, Charlayne Woodard, James McAvoy, and Anya Taylor-Joy. [PG-13](#), 129 min. [AMC Dine-in Block 37](#), [ArcLight](#), [Century 12](#) and [CineArts 6](#), [Chatham 14](#), [Ford City](#), [New 400](#), [River East 21](#), [Showplace ICON](#), 600 N. Michigan, [Webster Place 11](#)

The Heat: A Kitchen (R)evolution

A Canadian-made documentary profiling seven female chefs. Maya Gallus directed. 75 min. *Fri 1/18, 6:30 and 8:30 PM; Sat 1/19-Sun 1/20, 2:30, 4:30, and 6:30 PM; Mon 1/21-Thu 1/24, 6:30 and 8:30 PM. Facets Cinematheque*

The Joneses

Documentary covering five years in the life of a Mississippi family led by transgender matriarch Jheri Jones. Moby Longinotto directed. **80 min. Fri 1/18, 7 and 9 PM; Sat 1/19, 3, 5, 7, and 9 PM; Sun 1/20, 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 PM; Mon 1/21-Thu 1/24, 7 and 9 PM. Facets Cinematheque**

Mega Time Squad

Tim van Dammen directed this New Zealand action-comedy about a criminal who finds a time travel device, and plans to use it for a heist. *86 min. Sat 1/19, 7 PM. Chicago Filmmakers*

Shirkers

Novelist Sandi Tan's documentary is about an ill-fated 1992 independent film she and a group of friends had shot in Tan's home country of Singapore and the disappearance of a collaborator, who took all of the footage.

Tall Tales

A wandering musical cricket is framed for the kidnapping of the queen of a village of insects in this animated French children's film. Arnaud Bouron and Antoon Krings directed. **88 min. Sat 1/19, 11:30 AM. Music Box Theatre** 



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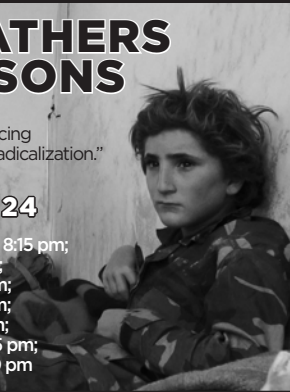


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Two weird sounds that go down easy together

Oddball electronic artist Mukqs and outsider rapper Sharkula make a surprisingly approachable collaborative EP.

By LEOR GALIL



Mukqs (aka Maxwell Allison) and Sharkula (aka Brian Wharton)

© ADAM JASON COHEN

One of Chicago's most accessibly bizarre musical collaborations of 2019 began at a Burger King in Evanston. A couple years ago Maxwell Allison, who makes experimental music as Mukqs and helps run the eclectic Hausu Mountain label, was walking past the fast-food joint when he spotted rapper Brian Wharton, better known as Sharkula, sitting inside.

Wharton says they cut a deal: he gave Allison a couple of his CD-Rs in trade for a fish-fillet sandwich, or maybe two sandwiches. Wharton doesn't mention which albums they were, but if they're anything like the Sharkula CD-Rs I've bought, each one came wrapped in a sheet of photocopied paper densely covered in his erratic but detailed cartoons and jumbo bubble letters. Before Allison left, he suggested that the two of them record together—something he'd been thinking about for a while. Though

he and Wharton never subsequently discussed what their collaboration would sound like, they stayed in touch to reassure each other it was happening. After Allison finished the beats—it took him about a year—Wharton recorded his vocals last May in Allison's basement studio, finishing every song in a single take. The Sharkula x Mukqs EP *Prune City* comes out February 1 on Hausu Mountain.

Allison and Wharton come from different scenes—more accurately, Allison comes from the experimental electronics scene and Wharton is an idiosyncratic loner who doesn't belong to any single scene at all. Since self-releasing his 1997 debut, *I Wonder*, Wharton has built a career selling homemade CD-Rs hand-to-hand on Chicago's sidewalks and train platforms. Also known as Thigahmahjiggee or Thig and (less frequently) as Dirty Gilligan, he's probably the only rapper still running that hustle who can also sell you a DVD doc-

umentary about himself, 2010's *Sharkula: Diarrhea of a Madman*. Because he's spent so long hawking his music directly to fans (or to people who'd never heard of him before but liked his pitch), he can seem strangely omnipresent, despite a highly sporadic performance schedule. In 2017 a meme made the rounds online that framed a photo of Wharton with the words "When your friend says he's well versed in Chicago rap / But he can't even tell you who this is."

Wharton has stayed underground for decades, and though he might like to be more popular, he's definitely not willing to change his scattered, unconventional, sometimes off-the-beat flow, his anachronistic love for a grimy boom-bap sound redolent of 90s hip-hop, or his fascination with lyrics about bodily functions. He's also in his mid-40s—hardly the age when most rappers break out. But Wharton's loose-limbed, unpredictable ➔

continued from 27

rhymes have earned him fans in unexpected places: in the past couple years, he's appeared on Hannibal Buress's *Handsome Rambler* podcast, recorded with legendary rap weirdo Kool Keith, and turned up repeatedly in Gabby Schulz's graphic memoir, *A Process of Drastically Reducing One's Expectations*.

Allison says he first heard about Wharton in 2007, when he moved from Elmhurst to Evanston to attend college. In 2012, about a year after relocating to Chicago proper, he debuted his most notable project to date: the improvising noise and ambient trio Good Willsmith, in which he partnered with Natalie Chami (aka TALsounds) and Doug Kaplan (aka MrDougDoug). He and Kaplan launched Hausu Mountain that same year, and the label put out Good Willsmith's first physical release, the cassette *Is the Food Your Family Eats Slowly*, in July. Hausu Mountain, also known as HausMo, has grown into one of the most important new experimental labels in the country: it's released music by pop-folk-electronica iconoclast Eartheater, misfit free-jazz-inspired noise improvisers Moth Cock, freakout genre collagist Fire-Toolz, and mesmerizing postrock duo ROM (Matt Crum and Roberto Carlos Lange, aka Helado Negro).

HausMo has handled subsequent releases from Good Willsmith too, as well as from the solo projects of its members, though it's not the only home for any of them. The trio's other partners include celebrated Mexico City label Umor Rex, which in 2018 dropped *Exit Future Heart*, an album-length collaboration between Good Willsmith and the long-running team of composer Takako Minekawa and guitarist Dustin Wong. With Good Willsmith and through HausMo, Allison has begun to break out of the greenhouse of the experimental scene, attracting press coverage from outlets that rarely pay attention to his kind of music, including NPR and *Fact* magazine.

Like many experimental musicians, Allison always seems to have 19 projects going at once: last year he not only released *Exit Future Heart* but also two outre-dance cassettes under the name Mukqs and the debut of Crazy Bread, his duo with guitar maestro Ryley Walker, titled *Vocoder Divorce*. As varied and strange as his output has been, though, it hasn't had much overlap with hip-hop, which he describes as foundational to his perspective. "Hip-hop was some of the earliest shit I ever listened to," he says. "I had an old MP3 player when I was growing up—it had ten songs on there, and they were all Snoop Dogg, Jurassic 5." Allison swears by Three 6 Mafia in particular, and he

rhapsodizes about contemporary rappers via Good Willsmith's insightful and endearingly silly Twitter account. "That's in my DNA," he says. "But of course, it's harder for me to relate to that world without someone like Brian to be there to do it, really—to rap. I don't rap. I don't do that, and I'm not trying to, because I don't think I would add anything."

"He's not Ronald Reagan," Wharton interjects.

"I'm not Ronald Reagan, that much is true," Allison replies. "I'm not trying to add anything to the conversation as an MC, ever. That's not my life."

Allison had experimented with hip-hop production before working with Wharton, but the results never saw the light of day. He also knew Wharton before the Burger King rendezvous that led to *Prune City*—they'd crossed paths at concerts and parties. "Brian is a creature of the night—so am I," Allison says. "I go to three shows a week, no matter what. I don't really hang out too much at bars just to hang out at a bar—I'd go to a show, pretty much."

Wharton lives in Rogers Park but regularly commutes to Logan Square (where Allison lives) and Wicker Park to sell his music at night. I've run into both of them along the strip of bars and venues on Milwaukee between California and Fullerton. When the three of us met for this story at El Pecado in Rogers Park, Wharton walked in with a limp—a side effect of all the miles he puts in selling his music. Last week he was hospitalized overnight due to fever and exhaustion. "It's draining," Wharton says. "I know that in order for me to keep my reputation alive, I gotta keep on going."

The *Prune City* EP, which is already in stock at Galerie F in Logan Square, consists of seven tracks totaling about 33 minutes—its production only took Allison so long because he had other irons in the fire. "I always go with the 'first thought, best thought' kind of vibe," he says. "Whatever I make up front, I don't really edit it or fuck with it."

"Yeah, that's why we get along," Wharton says.

"I'm not poring over it and trying to make it better," Allison says. "Every beat that I made for this album, even though it took me like a year, they were all single sessions for each track. I would take a couple days to work on one—"

"I feel really special," Wharton says.

During the year or so Allison worked on the tracks for *Prune City*, he'd occasionally meet up with Wharton to eat Mediterranean food or drink beer at Cole's or the Owl. They never talked about their collaboration. But



The cover of the Sharkula x Mukqs EP *Prune City*, released by Hausu Mountain

once Allison had finished about 40 minutes of material (they didn't use it all), he e-mailed it to Wharton. His bonkers beats include charred drums and what sounds like a computer malfunctioning ("Screamin' on Your Booty"), a spooky, minimal piano melody cut up with industrial clangs ("Mustache Like Pringles"), and clean hi-hats slicing into dreamy washes of synths ("Expand Your Mind").

"The beats were dope—that motivated me to come with some tight written verses and tight freestyles," Wharton says. "What inspired me a lot was he took me so serious."

In May 2018, shortly after Wharton finished a brief tour with Kool Keith, he stopped by Allison's Logan Square apartment to record the vocals for *Prune City*. They spent about four hours together, though not all of it was in the basement studio. "We drank, like, six Red Stripes—three each—and sat in my backyard for a little bit," Allison says. A neighbor who'd been hanging out on his balcony saw them together. "The next day he was like, 'Was that Sharkula in your backyard?' I was like, 'Yeah, dude,'" Allison says. "Sharkula gets recognized even in an enclosed backyard."

Throughout *Prune City*, Wharton zips back and forth between sturdy, bite-size bars and amorphous, nonlinear freestyles, sometimes giving words to the moods that Allison creates with the music. On the EP's lead single, "Wipe Your Booty With a Bandana," Wharton responds to the sloshing, oceanic synths with the line, "Ooh shit, I'm stranded on an island, the water." In song as in conversation, his train of thought can be hard to keep up with,

but some of his words are relatively easy to parse: you can always count on references to bowel movements, for instance, and often he mentions an experience that seems plausibly autobiographical, such as drinking Red Stripe ("Expand Your Mind"), eating at Chicago Diner ("Hitchhiking on the Mic Device"), or crying in a steam room ("Bigass Beard"). With Wharton as with Allison, you can only predict so much.

"It makes perfect sense to work with Brian, because he operates from an improvised angle, like, freestyling," Allison says. "That's totally in tune with what I do with other people—just improvising. But within the context of this duo, what I bring to the table isn't actually improvised. It's very deliberate, 'cause the track exists—in that way, the improvising instinct is coming from him and not from me. It's like, I'm handing it off."

Wharton rolls with the analogy. "He's kind of like the quarterback, and I'm the running back, and then I might do an option," he says. "If I fumble, then he retrieves the ball."

"There's no such thing as fumbling with you, dude," Allison insists. "With you, everything is loose. If you fumble, it doesn't matter."

"We all win," Wharton agrees. "Mistakes are golden."

"If you approach it where there is no such thing as a mistake, that's the best way to do it," Allison says. "This is cliché as hell, but it's like jazz—there's no wrong notes."

Wharton agrees. "The sloppier the better, basically." 

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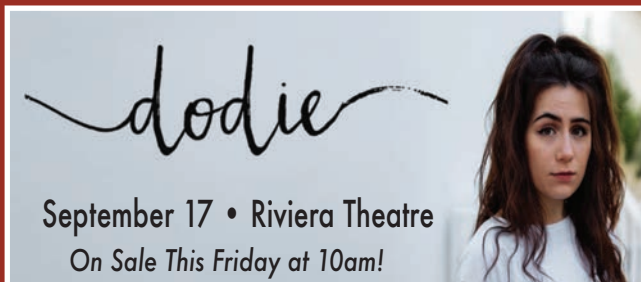
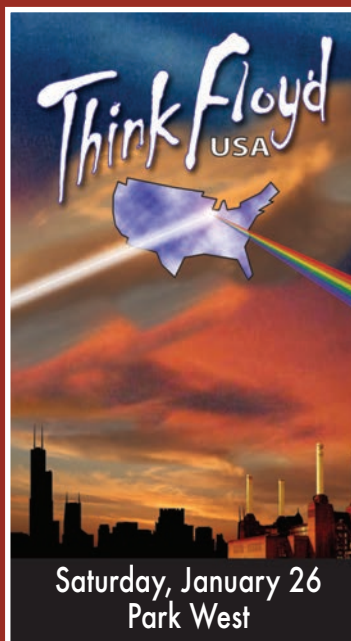
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PICK OF THE WEEK

Chicago pop mastermind Victor Cervantes knows how the future sounds

IN MARCH 2017, local pop wunderkind Victor Cervantes, aka Victor!, sold out the first run of his self-released debut CD-only EP, *Glitter98*. Now 18, he's doubled down on his music career, transforming it from an extracurricular activity to his main focus—in fact, he left high school early in order to pursue his art (per the *Chicago Tribune*, he's been working toward receiving his GED). The labor Cervantes has poured into his creative output has paid off, and his distinctive approach along with the harmonious way he blends genres in his most recent tracks makes it feel like he's hit upon the shape of music to come. He hits the sweet spot with his falsetto hook on the dreamy, limber funk single “U Got My,” and his genuine nature comes through beneath the woebegone keys, warped vocals, and bone-dry percussion on “Portra 400.” In concert, Cervantes is charming and occasionally impish. When he performed the lackadaisical “Tinder Song” while opening for Ric Wilson at Lincoln Hall in June, he opened Tinder on his phone and proceeded to swipe through the app without looking—but even his search for new romance didn't distract him from nailing all the notes. —**LEOR GALIL**

THURSDAY 17

DECA *Showyousuck* opens. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, \$12, \$10 in advance. 21+

Denver-born, New York-based MC and producer Deca wallows gleefully in the loopy psychedelic end of hip-hop. His past records have owed debts to the Native Tongues collective (groups who were members, including De la Soul and A Tribe Called Quest, get frequent shout-outs), but on last year's instrumental album *Flux* (Beulah) he draws equally on loungey trip-hop. Some tracks feel like they could be outtakes from classic Dan the Automator records: On “Space Dust” Deca combines laid-back beats, drifting horn samples, and corny inspirational snippets of announcements and dialogue into an ode to expanded chemical and spiritual consciousness. “On the Clock” rocks like a woozy metronome, clicking and bubbling off “into the silence, into the light” (as a disembodied voice declaims at the track's conclusion). *Flux* also contains a number of remixes; on “Skyward,” a reworking of a 2017 track (for which he released a wonderful video in the vein of *Yellow Submarine*), Deca put an ominous beat beneath his wry, slippery rhymes about grasping for—and missing—enlightenment. “God bless the poet proletariat,” he raps, then mourns “strange beautiful things losing their wings” before sliding improbably into a chorus about a whale's stomach lining. Like his hip-hop heroes, Deca makes you giggle and think simultaneously—it's boom-bap to feed your head. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**

VICTOR! See *Pick of the Week* at left. *Still Wooly* headlines; *Victor!*, *Monster Rally*, and *Jordanna* open. 8 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, sold out. 18+

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2.20-21 PROCOL HARUM

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MUSIC

continued from 30

2017's *Chalice Hymnal* (Temporary Residence), the Portland band pare down to the core trio of Alex John Hall, Emil Amos, and William Zakary Riles and crawl deep into dusty post-Americana, library music, gnarly psychedelia, and Eastern motifs. With a few touring members in tow, the multi-instrumentalists hit Chicago as part of Lincoln Hall and Schubas' Tomorrow Never Knows festival, and they're joined by two other exceptional instrumental acts. In the main support slot is rock cellist **Helen Money**, who boosts her dark, somber, and powerful minimalist arrangements with effects pedals and percussive backing. Her latest album, 2016's *Become Zero* (Thrill Jockey)—an ode to her deceased parents—contains some of her starkest work to date. It's also her most sonically versatile, with added elements such as piano, electronics, and MIDI sounds. Opening the show is **Black Duck**, a new trio featuring some of Chicago's most exciting postrock and jazz songwriters and improvisers: guitarist Douglas McCombs (Tortoise, Brokeback), guitarist Bill MacKay, and drummer Charles Rumbach. Together, the three craft alternately groove-based and free-form psych-rock improvisations. If you like emotionally resonant instrumental music, it's hard to top this show's lineup. —**SCOTT MORROW**

SATURDAY19

ATOMIC 9 PM, *Hungry Brain*, 2319 W. Belmont, \$15. 21+

Scandinavian quintet Atomic first convened in 2000, and even after nearly two decades, they never have trouble generating material in-house. Saxophonist and clarinetist Fredrik Ljungkvist, trumpeter Magnus Broo, pianist Håvard Wiik, bassist Ingebrigt Håker Flaten, and drummer Hans Hulbækmo (who replaced original drummer Paal Nilssen-Love in 2014) are all fluent improvisers in free and structured settings. Both Wiik and Ljungkvist write involving, multipart compositions that reconcile the contrasting energy levels, rhythmic imperatives, and structural ambitions of contemporary classical music with the post-bebop jazz continuum. The 2018 album *Pet Variations* (Odin) is the band's first of tunes by outside composers, and while the choice to play pieces written by the likes of Jimmy Giuffrè, Jan Garbarek, Olivier Messiaen, and Brian Wilson shows their musical roots, the ways they recast them suggest that Atomic are as good at finding hidden possibilities within someone else's music as they are at creating their own; in 1964 Paul Bley played "Walking Woman," which was written by his then-wife Carla Bley, as a frantic post-bebop pile-up, but Atomic ease the tempo and add just enough space to reveal the elegance of the tune's design. The droning bass and gently insistent rhythm they add to Edgard Varèse's "Un Grand Sommeil Noir" draw deep-blue tragedy out of an already mournful melody. And they transform the Beach Boys' "Pet Sounds" from a scrap of fey psychedelia into a brawny, swinging anthem. —**BILL MEYER**



Fran
ALEXA VISCIU

SUNDAY20

FRAN S. Carey headlines; *Wild Pink*, *Gold Star*, and Fran open. 7 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$20. 18+

In a 2017 interview with *Sixty Inches From Center* contributor (and *Reader* staffer) S. Nicole Lane, Fran front woman Maria Jacobson talked about her nightly routine of playing her acoustic guitar just before she goes to bed. "A lot of times I still will use it kind of in response to things that happen in my life," she said. "If I'm overwhelmed with anxiety or trying to unwrap some emotion, I'll kind of take to the guitar. Which sounds like, I dunno, melodramatic or something, but it really helps. It's very therapeutic." Perhaps Jacobson's relationship with her guitar is the inspiration behind the balmy quality of Fran's debut EP, 2017's *More Enough* (Lake Paradise). The band, which is rounded out by guitarist Mike Altergott, drummer Raul Cotaquispe, and bassist-keyboardist Atticus Lazenby, plays easygoing indie rock with patience and warmth, creating a mood that prevails even through the EP's roughest and loudest passages, such as the sped-up

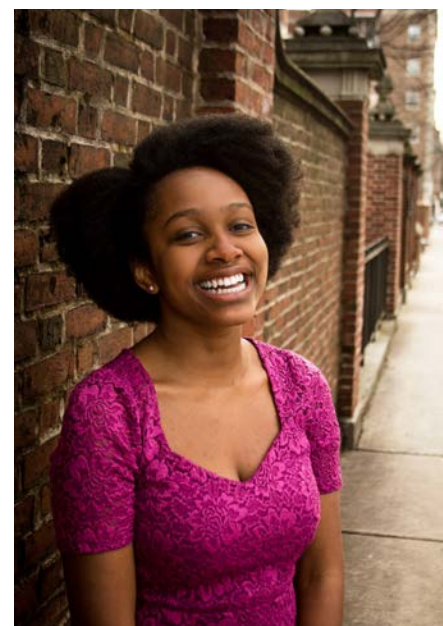
finale to "Parking Lot." Jacobson's taut, serene singing acts as a guiding light, and while her voice never flies free of the music's gravitational tug, I'd follow it even if it did. —**LEOR GALIL**

JUNGLE GREEN *Ornament* headlines. 8:30 PM, *Empty Bottle*, 1035 N. Western, \$5. 21+

Last winter singer-songwriter Andrew Smith posted flyers around Chicago to promote the oh-so-sweet solo recordings he'd made as Jungle Green, and he's since completely transformed his bedroom project into a six-piece band. The lineup is fleshed out with friends Smith made as a student at Columbia College, including Mattie McCall, Adam Miller, Adam Obermeier, Alex Heaney, and Emma Collins—each of whom plays an assortment of instruments. Smith released *Jungle Green's* full-band debut, *Space Cadet*, via his Atlantic City Melodies imprint in October. On the EP, Smith and his pals punch up some of the sickly-sweet, lovelorn ditties he released on his own into richer, meatier songs and deliver some new material; the whole record is built on lean rhythmic backbones, gently upbeat rock melodies, and the occasional warmhearted vocal harmony. As a front man, Smith keeps the vulnerable, lovey-dovey essence of his intimate solo recordings intact, such as when he stretches his voice into its upper register during his tender turn on the forlorn "It's Raining Outside." Live, *Jungle Green* churn out the simple, catchy songs, keeping each melody tight while allowing space for Smith to wander vocally and physically; when I saw them play the Logan Square Food Truck Social in August, he sang the Velvet Underground-inflected ripper "Happiness" while meandering around on the pavement in front of the stage and playing hacky sack with omnipresent festival personality Matthew Churney (aka "hacky sack guy"). —**LEOR GALIL**

CARL TESTA'S SWAY 8 PM, *Elastic*, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10. 18

People often talk about machines taking over society like it's a bad thing, but Connecticut multi-instrumentalist Carl Testa envisions a relationship in which musicians and computers coexist just fine. Testa plays double bass and electronics with band-leaders such as Anthony Braxton and Tyshawn Sorey, but in his own groups he likes to focus on playing his strings while computer processing adds dynamics to the sound. Testa has developed a series of computer systems that analyze the playing of his collaborators and respond to it by ➔



Ayanna Woods KYLE JON-ROBERT PICHA PHOTOGRAPHY



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JANUARY 23	BUDDY DAMEN AND THE LAST CALL
	TWICE REMOVED
JANUARY 24	JIGGERY-POKERY
JANUARY 25	SKIPPIN' ROCKS
JANUARY 26	STRAY BOLTS
JANUARY 27	WHOLESMERADIO DJ NIGHT
JANUARY 28	RC BIG BAND 7PM
	RICK SHANDLING DUO 9:30PM
JANUARY 30	AJ ROSALES
	JET NEDSON
	DAVID BRAVOS
JANUARY 31	SUNNDOG
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"A Musical Gem" - NY Times

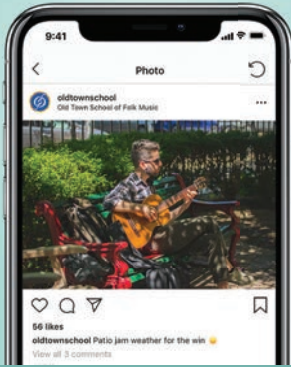


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 Thu, Jan. 31 - Country Night In Berwyn (SideBar)
 Fri, Feb. 1 - Rico
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 Sun, Feb. 3 - The Legendary Count Basie Orchestra
 Fri, Feb. 8 - The Bad Examples
 Sat, Feb. 16 - Patrick Sweany / The Greyhounds
 Sun, Feb. 17 - Teflons / Sunny Side Up
 Tue, Feb. 19 - Sean Rowe
 Thu, Feb. 21 - Mary Lane & The Static Blues Band
 Fri, Mar. 1 - Bono Brothers
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STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS
 DEHD
 WED JAN 23 / 8PM / 18+



THE DRUMS
 WED MAY 1
 8:30PM / 18+



PUP
 SAT MAY 4
 7:30PM / ALL AGES



JAWBOX
 SAT JUL 27
 7:30PM / ALL AGES



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FRIDAY JAN 25 / 9PM / 18+
THE LEMON TWIGS
 JACKIE COHEN / JUNGLE GREEN

SATURDAY JAN 26 / 9PM / 18+
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MUSIC

continued from 32

imposing changes in amplitude, reverberation, and decay on each musician's output. In Sway, the system he'll use tonight, the musicians have control over the notes they play, but though they improvise, they're not completely free. Instead, they have their instruments plugged into the computer and must accommodate what the program does to their sound. Sway gives the computer the combined role of live-dub remixer and composer: using prearranged criteria, it can evaluate what a musician is playing and nudge them to move on by changing their sound. Provided the computer running it has enough speed, memory, and microphone inputs, Sway can be used by any number of players; tonight Testa and vocalist Anne Rhodes (who is married to him) will be joined by violinist Hanna Brock, tenor

saxophonist and clarinetist Aaron Getsug, guitarist Christopher Riggs, and contrabass clarinetist Alejandro Acierto. The day before the concert, Testa will join Dan Derks and Meredith Johnston to discuss and demonstrate hybrid acoustic/digital systems. —BILL MEYER

AYANNA WOODS ZRL and Yadda Yadda open.
Fulton Street Collective, 1821 W. Hubbard,
donation suggested. 🍷

If you've ever heard of Chicago composer, singer, and multi-instrumentalist Ayanna Woods, it might have been at Constellation, where groups such as Fifth House Ensemble and ZRL have performed her works. Or maybe her music has streamed

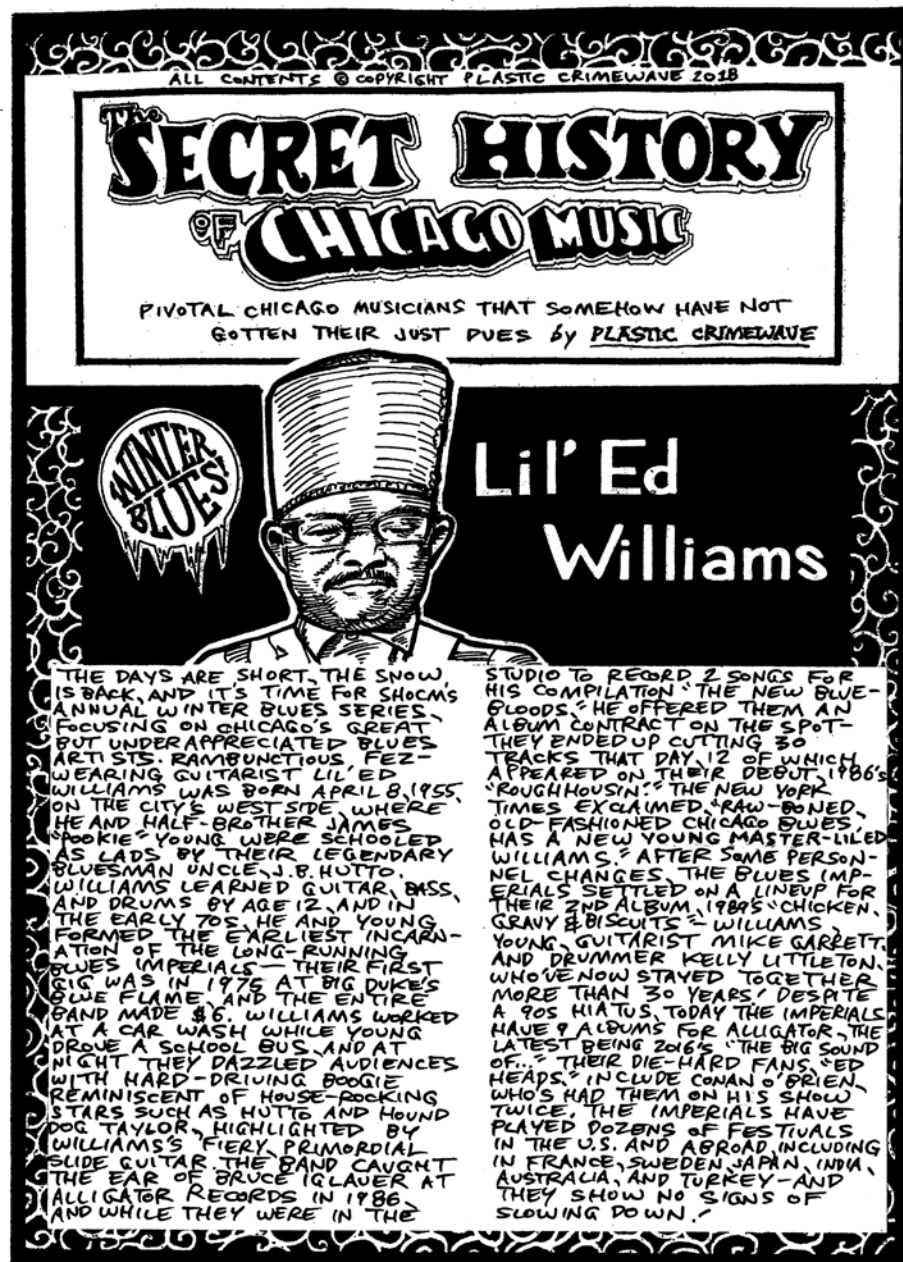


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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE

Li'l Ed Williams

WINTER BLUES

THE DAYS ARE SHORT, THE SNOW IS BACK, AND IT'S TIME FOR SHOW'S ANNUAL WINTER BLUES SERIES, FOCUSING ON CHICAGO'S GREAT BUT UNDERAPPRECIATED BLUES ARTISTS. RAMBUNCTIOUS, FEZ-WEARING GUITARIST LIL' ED WILLIAMS WAS BORN APRIL 8, 1955, ON THE CITY'S WEST SIDE, WHERE HE AND HALF-BROTHER JAMES "BOOKIE" YOUNG WERE SCHOOLED AS LEADS BY THEIR LEGENDARY BLUESMAN UNCLE J.B. HUTTO. WILLIAMS LEARNED GUITAR, BASS, AND DRUMS BY AGE 12, AND IN THE EARLY 70S, HE AND YOUNG FORMED THE EARLIEST INCARNATION OF THE LONG-RUNNING BLUES IMPERIALS—THEIR FIRST SIG WAS IN 1975 AT BIG DUKE'S BLUE FLAME, AND THE ENTIRE BAND MADE \$6. WILLIAMS WORKED AT A CAR WASH WHILE YOUNG DROVE A SCHOOL BUS, AND AT NIGHT THEY DAZZLED AUDIENCES WITH HARD-DRIVING BOOGIE REMINISCENT OF HOUSE-ROCKING STARS SUCH AS HUTTO AND HOUND DOG TAYLOR, HIGHLIGHTED BY WILLIAMS'S FIERY PRIMITIVE SLIDE GUITAR. THE BAND CAUGHT THE EAR OF BRUCE IGLAUER AT ALLIGATOR RECORDS IN 1986, AND WHILE THEY WERE IN THE STUDIO TO RECORD 2 SONGS FOR HIS COMPILATION "THE NEW BLUE-BLOODS," HE OFFERED THEM AN ALBUM CONTRACT ON THE SPOT—THEY ENDED UP CUTTING 30 TRACKS THAT DAY, 12 OF WHICH APPEARED ON THEIR DEBUT, 1986'S "ROUGH HOUSIN'." THE NEW YORK TIMES EXCLAIMED, "RAW-BONED, OLD-FASHIONED CHICAGO BLUES, HAS A NEW YOUNG MASTER-LILED WILLIAMS." AFTER SOME PERSONNEL CHANGES, THE BLUES IMPERIALS SETTLED ON A LINEUP FOR THEIR 2ND ALBUM, 1989'S "CHICKEN, GRAVY & BISCUITS." WILLIAMS YOUNG, GUITARIST MIKE GARRETT, AND DRUMMER KELLY LITTLETON, WHO'VE NOW STAYED TOGETHER MORE THAN 30 YEARS, DESPITE A 90S HIATUS, TODAY THE IMPERIALS HAVE 9 ALBUMS FOR ALLIGATOR, THE LATEST BEING 2016'S "THE BIG SOUND OF..." THEIR DIE-HARD FANS, "ED HEADS," INCLUDE CONAN O'BRIEN, WHO'S HAD THEM ON HIS SHOW TWICE. THE IMPERIALS HAVE PLAYED DOZENS OF FESTIVALS IN THE U.S. AND ABROAD, INCLUDING IN FRANCE, SWEDEN, JAPAN, INDIA, AUSTRALIA, AND TURKEY—AND THEY SHOW NO SIGNS OF SLOWING DOWN.

TUNE INTO THE RADIO VERSION OF "THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC" ON "OUTSIDE THE LOOP" ON WGN RADIO 720AM, SATURDAY AT 6AM WITH HOST MIKE STEPHEN. COMMENTS, IDEAS TO ARCHIVED @ OUTSIDETHELOOPRADIO.COM plasticwave@hotmail.com

through your headphones while you were listening to Eve Ewing's new podcast *Bughouse Square*. Woods's songs, including "Has to Be," have also been featured in the webseries *Brown Girls*, and in 2017 she appeared alongside Ewing and poet Nate Marshall in the live-action Manual Cinema film performance *No Blue Memories—The Life of Gwendolyn Brooks*. With her history of such varied creative endeavors, it's tough to guess where Woods will focus her talents at any given moment, but we do know what she'll be up to tonight—showcasing her vocal-instrumental works, a few small-scale choral arrangements, and some excerpts from *No Blue Memories* at Fulton Street Collective. She'll be joined by E'mon Lauren, Chicago's first Youth Poet Laureate, who will give a reading, and ZRL, who'll perform Woods's new work *It Bears Repeating*,

which they recently recorded (due out on vinyl this spring through Homeroom's *Physics for Listeners* series). Woods will close out the show with her songwriting project *Yadda Yadda*, which will release its debut record this fall. The mix of artists and mediums presented in tonight's program is a testament to Woods's diverse influences and unique musical journey; she grew up singing in Chicago's Children's Choir and the gospel choir of her church before earning her BA in music composition at Yale, and she's since collaborated with a number of contemporary music ensembles. Woods describes her music as "wildly improvisational and mathematically rigorous," and that's an apt overview of *Triple Point*, her recent quartet piece for Third Coast Percussion, which fuses her classical training and minimalist pop sensibilities. —KERRY O'BRIEN

WEDNESDAY²³

STEPHEN MALKMUS & THE JICKS *Dehd* opens. 8 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$28, \$26 in advance. 18+

The music of Stephen Malkmus can roughly be divided among his three main bands: Pavement, the Jicks, and Silver Jews. For better or for worse, Pavement tend to overshadow the other two—their rough, fuzzed-out music and enigmatic, humorous lyrics made them alt-rock darlings during the genre's 90s heyday, and their stamp on indie rock has been felt ever since. But though Pavement were done with making music in 1999, Malkmus was not. Soon after the band split up, he formed Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks, and he's been consistently releasing albums with them ever since. Pavement is known for its raw sound and classic indie-rock conventions, but in the Jicks, Malkmus gets away from any self-imposed limitations and constrictions, with vintage synths, strings, and winds making more frequent appearances than they did in his earlier band. For Malkmus, his era with the Jicks is one of exploration, and the group's seventh album, May's *Sparkle Hard*, effectively captures that spirit. On "Rattler," Malkmus's Auto-Tuned vocals float atop pulsing and filtered synths before they're interrupted by overdriven guitar lines that play up the con-



Stephen Malkmus & the Jicks © JAMES REXROAD

trast between smooth electronics and rock grit. "Solid Silk" has a much more somber and melancholic atmosphere—while the funky 80s-style synths on the track might sound a bit jarring on their own, the lush string arrangements and warm, swirling guitars that accompany Malkmus's lilting vocals give them a different context. By incorporating a slew of new and old sounds from across Malkmus's career as well as fresh changes in energy and dynamics, *Sparkle Hard*

shows how a songwriter can evolve over the course of 30 years. But even if I didn't find that progression fascinating, I'm still a sucker for any artist who unexpectedly and tastefully uses Auto-Tune.

—IZZY YELLEN

YAWNING MAN *Freedom Hawk* opens. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12. 21+

Formed in La Quinta, California ("the Gem of the Desert"), in 1986, Yawning Man are largely considered the fathers of the desert-rock movement. The band's now legendary "generator parties"—all-night drug-fueled jams held in the middle of nowhere and named for the equipment they'd use to power the shows—are still spoken about as life-changing moments by members of groups that emerged out of the same scene, including Kyuss and Queens of the Stone Age. Yawning Man recorded 30 or 40 demo tracks in the late 80s, but due to a series of musical distractions—they reinvented themselves as free-jazz-inspired punk group the Sort of Quartet, and founding members Mario Lalli and Larry Lalli formed a parallel desert-rock band, Fatso Jetson—they didn't release an album until 2005's *Rock Formations* (Alone). Yawning Man make instrumental tunes that are way spacier and prettier than much of the music that's come from the stoner-rock genre they helped kick off. On their third proper full-length, July's *The Revolt Against Tired Noises*, they perfectly showcase their mystical, psychedelic, and acrobatic stargazing in what are undoubtedly their best songs yet. Opening tonight's show are Virginia band Freedom Hawk, who formed the same year Yawning Man finally released a record and are stylistically indebted to their stoned-out desert-rock brethren. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

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DOCTOR WHO, THE CROWN



EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME



Grouper NINA CORCORAN

NEW

Aesthetic Perfection 10/5, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Architects, Thy Art Is Murder, While She Sleeps, 5/25, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall

Avett Brothers 9/20, 7:30 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Bayonne 4/26, 9 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 18+

Ryan Bingham 4/5, 7:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 18+

Blaqk Audio 3/26, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 18+

Boogie Trio 3/17, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Trace Bundy 6/21, 8:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Sam Bush 3/16, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 1/18, 8 AM

Cactus Blossoms 4/6, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Ceramic Animal, Spendtime Palace 4/4, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

Laura Cocks & Natacha Diels 3/9, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Judy Collins 2/15, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 1/18, 8 AM

Rose Cousins 5/16, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Darlingside 4/17, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 1/18, 8 AM

Mac DeMarco 9/28, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Dodie 9/17, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Jeremy Enigk, Tomo Nakayama 4/9, 8:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Damien Escobar 5/11, 7:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 18+

Ex Hex 4/10, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Fatai 3/7, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Bryan Ferry 8/1, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

500 Miles to Memphis 3/22, 9:30 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Flat Five 4/13, 9 PM, Fitzgerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 1/18, 11 AM

Jeff Goldblum & the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra 2/15, 7:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 17+

Patty Griffin 4/16, 7:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 18+

John "Papa" Gros Band 3/22, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Grouper 2/15, 7:30 PM, Chicago Athletic Association Hotel

Lily Hiatt 4/5, 8:30 PM, Fitzgerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 1/18, 11 AM

Van Hunt 3/26, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/17, noon

Iceage, Nadah El Shazly 5/7, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Jawbox 7/27, 7:30 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Johnnyswim 5/25, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

King Buffalo 3/15, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Delvon Lamarr Organ Trio 4/20, 8 PM, Martyrs', on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Lavender Country 4/14, 8 PM, Hideout

Mdou Mactar 4/4, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

John Moreland 4/6, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Mudhoney 5/26, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

MXPX, Five Iron Frenzy 3/29-30, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 17+

Nancy & Beth 5/6-7, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/17, noon

National Parks 4/13, 6 and 9 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 1/18, noon, 18+

Orville Peck 5/3, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Ben Pirani 3/22, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Priests 4/22, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Pup 5/4, 7:30 PM, Metro

Ragbirds, Claudettes 3/7, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Eric Roberson 4/25-27, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 1/17, noon

The Rumble with Breakdown, Death Threat, Damnation A.D., Red Death, Xibalba, Year of the Knife, and more 4/26, 5:30 PM and 4/27, 2 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Sasami 4/23, 7 PM, Schubas

Sneaks 3/27, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Squirrel Nut Zippers 4/13, 7 and 9:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Sticky Fingers 3/20, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Strand of Oaks 5/3, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 18+

Aaron Lee Tasjan 4/16, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Tauk 4/12, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

This Wild Life 4/27, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

Turnover, Turnstile 5/2, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Thu 1/17, 10 AM

Whitechapel, Dying Fetus 4/25, 5 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM, 17+

The Who 5/21, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 1/18, noon

Jai Wolf 4/26, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Xiu Xiu 5/17, 9 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 1/18, 10 AM

Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

UPDATED

John McCutcheon 2/5, 5 and 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, late show added

Royal Trux 2/22, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, postponed, 18+

UPCOMING

Acid Mothers Temple, Yaman-taka // Sonic Titan 4/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Action Bronson, Meyhem Lauren 2/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Baroness, Deafheaven 3/31, 6:30 PM, Riviera Theatre

Beths 3/6, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Black Queen, Uniform 3/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Break of Reality 4/16, 7 PM, Schubas

Cannibal Corpse, Morbid Angel, Necrot 3/4, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

Mariah Carey 3/11, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre

Neko Case, Shannon Shaw 4/26-27, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+

Christopher Cross 3/19-20, 8 PM, City Winery

Daughters, Blanck Mass 3/8, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Dave Davies 4/21, 8 PM, City Winery

Dawes 1/29, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

Dead & Company 6/14-15, 7 PM, Wrigley Field

Elder Island 3/19, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Elvis Depressedly 2/28, 6 PM, Cobra Lounge

Flesh Eaters 3/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall

Marty Friedman 2/13, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+

Steve Gunn, Gun Outfit 4/19, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Peter Hook & the Light 11/1, 9 PM, Metro, 18+

Hootie & the Blowfish, Bare-naked Ladies 8/24, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park

Wanda Jackson 3/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

ALL AGES FREE

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Judas Priest 5/25, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont

King Crimson 9/10, 8 PM, Auditorium Theatre

La Luz 3/22, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Lemon Twigs 1/25, 9 PM, Metro, 18+

Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center

Maggie Salute 1/26, 9 PM, Metro, 18+

Meek Mill 3/8, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom

Melkbelly 2/2, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

Mineral, Tancred 1/24, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall

Bob Mould Band 2/22-23, 8 PM, Metro, 18+

Rivers of Nihil, Enthéos 3/5, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+

Todd Rundgren 4/23-24, 8 PM, Athenaeum Theatre

Travis Scott 2/21, 8 PM, United Center

Soft Moon 1/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Supersuckers 3/12, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen

Teenage Fanclub 3/6, 7:30 PM, Metro, 18+

The-Dream 2/28, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Tourist 2/21, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

T.S.O.L. 5/31, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint

Tessa Violet 2/14, 7 PM, Beat Kitchen

Ben Wendel Seasons Band 2/9, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Wet, Kilo Kish 3/12, 6:30 PM, Metro

Whiskey Myers 3/29, 8 PM, the Vic, 18+

Wicca Phase Springs Eternal 3/8, 7 PM, Subterranean

Wild Reeds 4/6, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Anita Wilson 2/10, 7 PM, City Winery

Wisn y Yandel 6/7, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont

Chely Wright 1/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston

Ry X 3/26, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Rachael Yamagata 1/29-30, 8 PM, City Winery

Yob, Voivod 3/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Yoshi Flower 2/5, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

You Me at Six 3/2, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge

Yuri & Pandora 3/16, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont

Zomboy 2/8, 9 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

IN 2016 Gossip Wolf noted the formation of visionary local drone-song duo **Mending**, aka crystal-voiced singer **Kate Adams** and sound artist **Joshua Dumas**. This past August, Mending began releasing a four-hour, 40-song cycle called **We Gathered at Wakerobin Hollow**, whose graceful, narratively compelling music “follows a family and friends across four decades as they spread out from their small hometown until climate instability and authoritarian government draw them home again,” in the words of the band. On Friday, February 1, they release **Homeward**, the fourth of the cycle's nine chapters, via Bandcamp; the last is planned for December 2019. On Sunday, February 17, Mending play live on the Que4 Radio show **Chi-CityLives** (online and at 1680 AM).

Tremaine “Tree” Johnson is one of the best rappers to emerge from Chicago this decade, and from his 2012 breakout *Sunday School* till his 2016 collaboration with producer I.B.C.L.A.S.S.I.C. he released at least one strong full-length or EP every year. Since then, though, he's been quiet, dropping just a couple singles and making the occasional guest appearance. Fortunately, he's not about to disappear: late last month he released the solo EP **GOAT**, and this past weekend he and prolific rapper **Vic Spencer** put out the collaborative album **Nothing Is Something** (due on vinyl later this year via London label **Daupé**).

Trumpeter **Will Miller** is probably best known for playing in local indie-pop band **Whitney**, but he's also worked with Lil Wayne, Chance the Rapper, Mac Miller, and Twin Peaks—and he writes material for a group of his own called **Resavoir**. Last week, Resavoir dropped the righteous two-song digital single **Escalator** via **International Anthem**, and it includes a mind-blowing live version of the title track recorded at Co-Prosperity Sphere in June. Fans of Lonnie Liston Smith and Rotary Connection should dig Resavoir's humid soul-jazz vibe and irrepressible grooves! —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

By Dan Savage

SAVAGE LOVE

Fact-checking dick size

Navigating humiliation and commitment

Q: I'm a middle-aged man dating a younger guy. He wanted to be a "boy" to a Dom top daddy, and I was happy to oblige. The sex is amazing, and we click as people, too. Then a couple days ago, he told me he wanted to explore small penis humiliation (SPH). I was taken aback—not by the request, but because his penis is NOT small! It's not huge, but it's at least average. And it's thick! I'm not super hung, so it's not that he seems small in comparison—I have maybe an inch on him. When I pointed this out, he claimed I was just trying to make him feel better about his small size! He said I was patronizing him. He ended the conversation by saying he would drop it, since it was obviously making me uncomfortable. Honestly, I am uncomfortable with it. I just can't imagine bringing myself to go on about how small his dick is when I'm actually thinking how much that thing would hurt if he were to top me. But my bigger concern is that doing SPH might feed into possible body dysmorphia. The way he reacted to being told his penis wasn't small was a red flag—it told me this isn't just a fantasy. It's not that he wants to be made to FEEL it's small; he really believes it is small. How is this different from telling a skinny boyfriend what a big fat pig he is? I really like this guy, and I think this could go somewhere. I want to be GGG, but not at the cost of his mental health. —**NEED OBJECTIVITY, SAVAGE, PLEASE HELP!**

A: "The boy expressed a desire to play out a specific scene; he did not request a fact-check on his dick size," said Dr. Reece Malone, a board-certified sex therapist with a doctorate in human sexuality. "The boy's disappointment is understandable, especially if he was feeling hopeful that the request would be met with enthusiasm and mutual excitement."

Your boy was probably nervous when he brought SPH up, NOSPH, and his reaction to your reaction—his complaints about feeling patronized, his demand to drop the subject—was likely motivated by shame. Not shame about the size of his dick, but shame about this particular kink. He was open with you about other kinks right away, but sharing those kinks probably didn't make him feel as vulnerable as sharing this one did. He held SPH back until he felt he could really trust you. And after he worked up the nerve to tell you about his biggest turn-on, your response was to argue with him about whether his dick is small enough to qualify him for SPH play. "I think it's important that NOSPH revisit the conversation to examine if his reaction felt shaming," said Dr. Malone.

"While I appreciate NOSPH's concerns," continued Dr. Malone, "SPH scenes don't require one to have a small dick. It's engaging in the role-play itself that's hot and exciting. It really is no different if a daddy's skinny boyfriend wanted to engage in a fantasy where the thought of being a 'big fat pig' was hot and exciting for him."

Now, if he had a history of bulimia, telling him he's a "big fat pig" could be harmful; likewise, if he had a history of bigorexia, telling him he's a "skinny little shit" could be harmful. Your boyfriend may have a distorted idea about average dick size—most likely distorted by porn—but odds are good he's one of millions of people out there who have eroticized their anxieties and insecurities. So long as he isn't contemplating some dangerous or stupid way to make his cock bigger (like getting liquid silicone injected into his genitals, something that led to the death of a gay man in Seattle last year), you can engage in SPH without doing him harm.

"But NOSPH should ask more questions and engage in a dialogue on how his boy wants the scene played out, and if and how it would change their sexual dynamic overall," said Dr. Malone. "It's also fair for NOSPH to share his own concerns about feeding into body dysmorphia. He also has the right to set boundaries or decline the scene altogether."

Agreed! Limits and boundaries aren't just for subs, bottoms, or slaves. Doms, tops, Masters, and Mistresses get to have limits and set boundaries, too. If you can't go there, you aren't obligated to go there. But it might make you feel better about going there, NOSPH, if you bear in mind that you can mock his tiny cock (during sex play) and reassure him about his cock (during aftercare). If your boy doesn't feel like he has to win an argument about how small his cock is to get the SPH he wants, he →

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LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF PULASKI COUNTY, ARKANSAS DOMESTIC RELATIONS 14TH DIVISION ADELAIDE BUCK PLAINTIFF VS CASE NO: 60 DR 2018-4680 DAVID ROLON DEFENDANT WARNING ORDER The Defendant, David Rolon, is hereby warned to appear in the Circuit Court of Pulaski County in Domestic Relations, 14th Division, 401 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201 within thirty (30) days and answer the Complaint of the Plaintiff, Adelaide Buck, and upon failure of Defendant to do so, the Complaint filed herein will be deemed to be admitted. WITNESS my hand and seal as Clerk of the Circuit Court of Pulaski County, Arkansas, this 9TH day of January, 2019. (1/31)

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Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000321 on January 11, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of APARTMENT TWO with the business located at: 719 N. HOYNE AVENUE APT. #2, CHICAGO, IL 60612 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: JOSEPH BOTTIGLIERO 719 N. HOYNE AVENUE APT. #2 CHICAGO, IL 60612, USA (1/31)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19000288 on January 9, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of THE SOFT TOUCH with the business located at: 3525 N. RACINE AVE APT 2W, CHICAGO, IL 60657. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: TIFFINY YATES 3525 N. RACINE AVE APT 2W, CHICAGO, IL 60657 (1/31)

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SAVAGE LOVE

continued from 37

might be willing to admit—or finally be willing to accept—that his cock isn't really that small.

You can learn more about Dr. Malone and his work at reecemalone.com.

Q: I'm a gay man in my late 20s finishing up a graduate program and dating a man who is 38. The sex is great. Some context: We met on Scruff and dated for a little bit. Then I suffered a loss in my family—I was sad and confused, and didn't want a relationship during this time. We talked again in June 2018, we went to Pride in Minneapolis, and we have been together since December 2018. Recently he hinted about children and my attitude toward children. I responded that I want to have children of my own someday. However, in a text, he stated that he wants a child in a year or two. This seemed like an ultimatum to me, one that could make or break this relationship, and I wonder why he kept this from me. I do want children, but I'm still a starving student, a child is a huge responsibility, and I worry about the state of the world. And he texted this information to me! I feel anxious and pressured. What do I need to do? —**TEXT ULTIMATUM MAY UNRAVEL LOVING TIES**

A: Maybe you need to chill the fuck out, TUMULT.

People put their long-term goals on the table when they start getting serious about someone—long-term goals like the places they'd like to live or the kids they'd like to have—because if you're not on the same page about the big stuff, continuing to make a large emotional investment in the relationship sets both partners up for heartbreak. And while you seem to think he should have brought kids up sooner (or in person, which definitely would've been better), people who bring up kids on the first date don't get many second dates. Six months in is a perfectly reasonable time to bring kids up.

And where you see an ultimatum, TUMULT, I see an opening—the opening of negotiations. Your boyfriend would like to be a parent in a year or two. You would also like to be a parent, but not that soon. So make your counteroffer. If two years is too soon, tell him when you think you might be ready. Three years? Four? After you land a job in your field? After President Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez signs the Green New Deal into law?

All your boyfriend is saying—all he's texting—is that he sees a future with you and wants to know if you're on the same page about the big stuff. It's a compliment, TUMULT, not an ultimatum. And while there's no compromising about whether to have

kids—you can't have half a kid (not legally)—you can hammer out a compromise about when to have kids. **✂**

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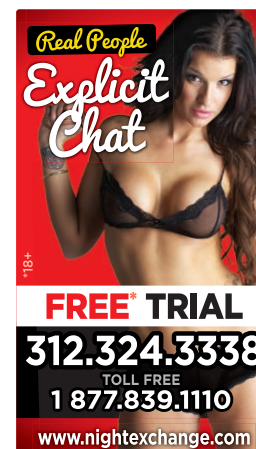


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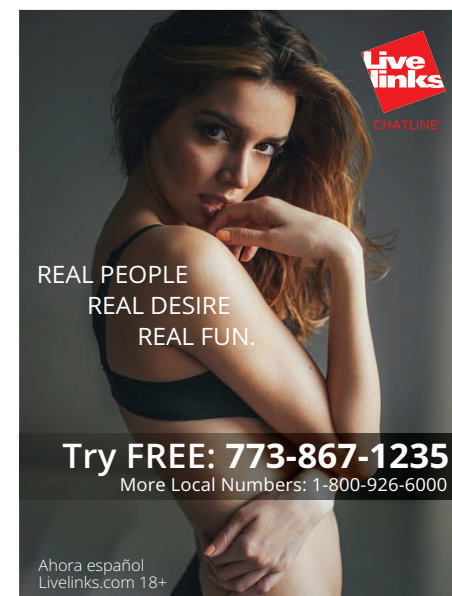
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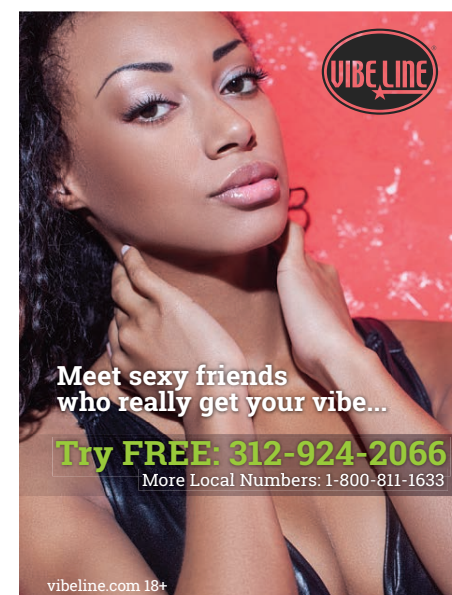


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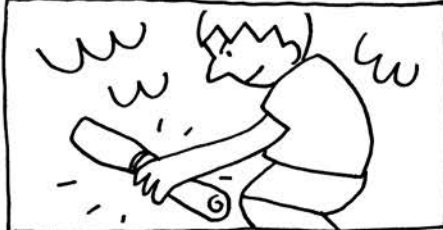
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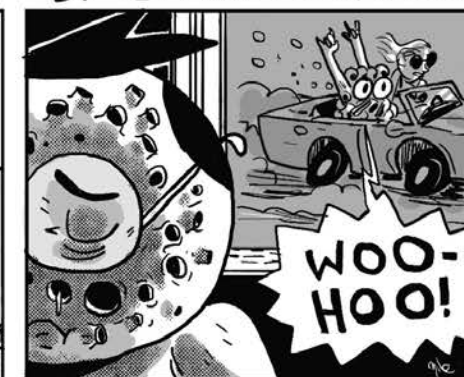
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